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Tina Atkins

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A CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERAL
EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE
CLASSROOMS

By

Tina Atkins

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Elementary, Middle School and Secondary Education
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2008

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Tina Atkins

2008

A CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERAL
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CLASSROOMS

By

Tina Atkins

Approved:

Jerry Mathews
Associate Professor of Leadership
and Foundations
(Major Professor and Dissertation
Director) (Graduate Coordinator)

James Davis
Assistant Professor of Leadership
and Foundations
(Committee Member)

Vincent McGrath
Professor of Leadership and Foundations
(Committee Member)

Anthony Olinzock
Professor of Instructional
Systems, Leadership, and Workforce
Development
(Committee Member)

Richard Blackburn
Professor/Dean of the College
of Education

Name: Tina Atkins

Date of Degree: December 12, 2008

Institution: Mississippi State University

Major Field: Educational Administration

Major Professor: Dr. Jerry Mathews

Title of Study: A CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN
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Candidate for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Increased accountability mandates from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 have resulted in general education teachers with disabled students in their classrooms. Within the inclusive classroom, the special education teacher and the general education teacher must develop a collaborative relationship that will consider the needs of the special education students and general education students. Villa and Thousand (1996) described the benefits of collaboration in schools: "Collaboration enables school personnel to meet diverse student needs through shared expertise and ownership of problem definitions and solutions" (p. 170).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how special education teachers and general education teachers in inclusive classrooms collaborate regarding the needs of students. The participants for this study were four special education teachers,

four general education teachers, and the administrator in one elementary school located in Mississippi. The research questions for this study were derived from six defining characteristics of collaboration as described by Friend and Cook (1996). The six defining characteristics are: (a) collaboration is voluntary; (b) collaboration requires parity among participants; (c) collaboration is based on mutual goals; (d) collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making; (e) collaboration requires individuals to share responsibility for outcomes. There were two research questions posed for this study: (1) How do special education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with general education teachers? (2) How do general education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with special education teachers?

DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my children who have tolerated me and supported me, during my entire educational journey. Lea, Emily, and Jimmy, I could not have done this without your love and support. You made many sacrifices and forfeited so much time to allow me to pursue my dream. Life has moved on and you have become such wonderful adults right before my eyes. I am so very proud of you!

I also dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Dalmer. You have been more than a sister to me during the course of my life. You have been there for every obstacle that I encountered personally and educationally. You have truly been my mentor and at times, my hero. Your drive to succeed in life as a powerful woman flowed over to me many times over. I know I would not have attempted this journey without you leading the way.

Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to my brothers, Billy and Tommy. Throughout my life, you taught me to stand tall and be tough.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Vera and James Atkins, who have been with me spiritually throughout this journey. Somehow, they instilled vast determination within me; the relentless drive of never giving up! I have always refused to take “no” for an answer. The spirit of my parents will always be within me.

The culmination of strength that I receive from my family, along with the strength that is given to me through Jesus Christ, instilled in me the courage, perseverance, and ability to complete this dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The concept of educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom “paralleled the movement away from racial segregation and helped lead to the determination that separating children was detrimental to them” (Rothstein, 2000, p. 12). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) which was passed in 2004 have mandated that schools improve educational performance results for children with disabilities. The combined laws mandate reform by providing accountability measures for instruction and assessment of students with disabilities (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007).

Traditionally, special education teachers and general education teachers have worked in isolation. However, including special education students in the general education classes has forced a paradigm shift that requires collaboration of the special education teacher and the general education teacher in order to meet the academic needs of the special education students (Villa & Thousand, 1996). Since general education teachers have limited training and knowledge relating to special education students, and special education teachers have limited training in general education content and curriculum, effective collaboration is vital to the success of their relationship in an inclusive classroom.

According to Friend and Cook (1996) within a collaborative culture, teachers can join their expertise, and personal knowledge and training, to develop a shared vision to implement effective teaching strategies and methods of assessment to ensure improved academic achievement of special education students.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how special education and general education teachers collaborate regarding the instructional needs for special education students in inclusive classrooms. Friend and Cook (1996) explained the “business of schools” is where “everyone literally or figuratively shuts their doors” (p. 17). Each teacher functions individually as an expert problem solver. Kavale and Forness (2000) added that a general education classroom is a place where large-group, undifferentiated instruction is dominant and teachers are more concerned with maintaining routine than meeting individual differences. Special education teachers must collaborate with general education teachers to ensure that the unique and diverse needs of special education students are met (Villa & Thousand, 1996). This study examined the relationship between special education teachers and general education teachers to determine if they utilized and implemented collaborative strategies to plan effective instruction for special education students.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were derived from six defining characteristics of collaboration as described by Friend and Cook (1996). The defining

characteristics used in this study were: (a) collaboration is voluntary; (b) collaboration requires parity among participants; (c) collaboration is based on mutual goals; (d) collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making; (e) individuals who collaborate share their resources and (f) individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes. These characteristics are defined thoroughly in the literature review.

The following questions guided my research:

1. Research Question 1: How do special education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with general education teachers?
2. Research Question 2: How do general education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with special education teachers?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were unique to my study:

1. *Alternate Assessment*: an assessment that substitutes for statewide testing mandates. The assessments are scored from an individual student portfolio of collected data (Zatta & Pullin, 2004).
2. *District-Wide Classes*: children who have an individualized educational program that requires a restrictive setting, at another school, designed to meet their needs academically or behaviorally.

3. *General Education Teacher*: a teacher who has completed the requirements for licensure in the area of general education. A general education teacher provides instruction in one or more subject areas to students with and without disabilities. At the elementary level (K-5), general education teachers provide instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
4. *Inclusion*: the full participation of students with special learning needs and disabilities in the daily life, curriculum, and learning activities of same-age peers in general classrooms.
5. *Inclusive Classroom*: a classroom shared by general education students and special education students. Grade level curriculum is taught to all students.
6. *Least Restrictive Environment*: refers to the IDEA's mandate that children with disabilities be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with nondisabled peers.
7. *Mississippi Curriculum Test*: the test that administered to every child in Mississippi in elementary and middle school. The test was developed in accordance with mandates of measuring student academic growth from *No Child Left Behind*.
8. *Self-Contained Student*: a student whose least restrictive environment is determined by the IEP committee to be in a special education setting for at least thirty nine percent of the school day.

9. *Significant Cognitive Disability (SCD)*: a student who meets each of the following criteria:
- (a) The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student's comprehensive assessment) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications.
 - (b) The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.
 - (c) The student's inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is not the result of excessive or extended absences or primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities; emotional-behavioral disabilities; specific learning disabilities; or social, cultural, or economic differences.
10. *Special Education Teacher*: a teacher who has completed the requirements for licensure in the area(s) of special education. A special education teacher provides specialized instruction to students who have an individualized education plan (IEP). These specialized services can be provided in the regular classroom, a pull-out setting (special education classroom) or a combination of the two.

Significance of Study

Inclusion of disabled students into the general education classroom was mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1997. Within the inclusive classroom, the special education teacher and general education teacher must develop a collaborative relationship that will consider the needs of the special education students and general education students. Villa and Thousand (1996) described the benefits of collaboration in schools: “Collaboration enables school personnel to meet diverse student needs through shared expertise and ownership of problem definitions and solutions” (p. 170).

Research indicates that inclusion is effective for special education students (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Frederickson, Osborne & Reed, 2004; Prater, Roach & Salisbury, 2006). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the collaboration between the special education teacher and general education teacher in an inclusive classroom.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered as this research is read.

1. I was a school administrator in the district where I conducted my study. My position may have influenced the teachers to behave in a manner that is different from the way they would have behaved for an unknown researcher (assuming that some of them may have recognized me by name, or face).
2. My presence may have affected the behavior of the teachers. My presence during the observations may have influenced the personal interaction

between the special education teachers and the general education teachers while they were instructing students in the inclusive classroom.

3. My presence may have caused the teachers to become anxious while they were observed and interviewed.
4. My presence may have influenced the students. They may have behaved differently than usual because they did not know what my role was in their classroom.
5. My position as an administrator in the same district may have influenced the teachers to participate in the study

Delimitations

The following delimitations will be considered as this research is read.

1. This study was conducted in a K-5 school and should not be generalized to other levels.
2. This study was conducted with one group of special education teachers, one group of general education teachers, and the principal in one school located in Mississippi.

Participation in this study was offered to all special education teachers and general education teachers who taught in an inclusive classroom. The school principal was asked to participate.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

Educational philosophy regarding children with disabilities occurred in several phases (Rothstein, 2000). The first phase began during the late 1800s. During this phase, disabled children were removed to separate, special classes. The intention was to relieve stress on the teacher and other students. This segregationist idea continued in later years, but the educational motive was to relieve the stress on the disabled child by educating them in separate, special classes. Academic programming was provided in the form of diluted academics and training for manual jobs. The students were segregated, and the concern was to avoid disruption in the classroom. Many students with disabilities did not attend public schools. By the mid 1900s educational leaders “recognized that separation, or segregation, in the educational process was usually inherently negative” (Rothstein, 2000, p.11).

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court invalidated state laws requiring or permitting racial segregation in public schools (Smith & Kozleski, 2005).

Chief Justice Earl Warren read aloud the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that racial segregation violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment stating, “We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of

separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. (p. 272)

The *Brown* decision recognized that if Black children were educated in equal, but separate facilities from White children, their treatment would be unequal because of the stigma attached to being separated. The Black children would be deprived of interacting with children of other races and backgrounds (Rothstein, 2000). The concept of educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom “paralleled the movement away from racial segregation and helped lead to the determination that separating children was detrimental to them” (p. 12).

Throughout the country, more than thirty separate court cases rose from the *Brown* decision (Rothstein, 2000). However, two landmark cases, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education* were instrumental in creating the current laws that are in effect today. *PARC v. Pennsylvania* was the foundation for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA). The EAHCA determined that children with disabilities may not be denied entrance into a public school or equal educational placement without parental permission. Additionally, parents of children with disabilities had the right to procedural due process when they did not agree with the school’s placement decision. The civil rights legislation, EAHCA, which was passed in 1975, was designed to ensure students with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education in their least restrictive environment (Smith & Kozleski, 2005). Rothstein defined least restrictive environment as a statute providing that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities,

including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, [should be] educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment (should occur) only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (p. 125)

The idea of least restrictive environment was further emphasized in 1986 when Madeline Will, Assistant Secretary of Education, called for a less fragmented approach to special education and sought for schools and districts to provide more services to students in the general education classroom (Kubicek, 1994; Will, 1986). Thus, the beginning push towards the regular education initiative, the concept that students should remain in the general education classroom and that services should be provided in the classroom. Will stated that pullout programs led to “fragmentation of service delivery, administrative practices which led to poor accountability, stigmatization of students, and a battleground atmosphere between regular and special educators” (Leonardi, 2001, p. 10).

The EAHCA was amended in 1990. The name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public law 101-476. IDEA was reauthorized again in 1997. A significant addition was an emphasis on the participation of students with disabilities in the general curriculum and in state and local assessments (Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001). The label *handicapped* was changed to *disabled* creating independence and autonomy for the disabled (Turnbull, 1993). The IDEA Amendment was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on June 4, 1997.

On March 12, 1999, the Department of Education expanded the 1997 IDEA Amendments (Altschuler & Kopels, 2003).

The IDEA defines children with disabilities as those with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (hereinafter referred to as emotional disturbance) orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities...who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services. (Rothstein, 2000, p. 47)

IDEA clarifies that the child must fit one of the categories listed above and requires the assistance of special education and/or related services to be academically successful (Rothstein, 2000). “Related services are part of the free appropriate public education services that must be provided to all children with disabilities within the state in order for the state to be eligible for funding under the IDEA” (p. 155). Examples of related services include special transportation, speech-language pathology, audiology, physical and occupational therapy, therapeutic recreation, social work services, counseling, etc. Any combination of these services may be required to assist a disabled child in receiving the maximum benefit of educational services.

In schools today, children with disabilities are protected under the mandates of IDEA. IDEA requires that schools provide children with Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment; along side their non-disabled peers (Rieck & Wadsworth, 2000). Cronis and Ellis (2000) add that the amendments to

IDEA place clear responsibility on educators to involve students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and to consider supplementary aids and services as part of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process in order to accomplish successful inclusion. Berres, Ferguson, Knoblock, and Woods (1996) define inclusion “as the full participation of students with special learning needs and disabilities in the daily life, curriculum, and learning activities of same-age peers in general classrooms” (p. 2). Inclusion is educational reform that has blurred the once separated general education and special education classrooms. Daniel and King (1997) stated that “the movement toward inclusive schooling is the latest wrinkle in an escalating debate focusing on the appropriate placement of students with special needs” (p. 67).

IDEA was reauthorized again, under the name of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. An important section of this act was the “full educational opportunity goal” which suggested that students with disabilities must be afforded the same opportunities of their non-disabled peers.

Historically, there has been a sense of a dual educational system in the United State; one for general education students and the other for special education students (Sebba, Thurlow, & Goertz, 2002; Zatta & Pullin, 2004). With the implementation of the federal laws governing Title I and No Child Left Behind, schools and states are experiencing an increased emphasis on exposing all students to the same standards and curricular expectations. The advent of high-stakes testing has only increased the needs to include students in the general education classrooms to ensure equal opportunity to learn grade level concepts and demonstrate those understandings on statewide tests.

Individualized Educational Program

In accordance with the mandates of IDEA, an individualized education program (IEP) is developed for each student with a recognized disability. According to Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) the IEP is “a major vehicle for assuring the provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE)” (p. 215). The IEP process involves developing a document that designs an appropriate educational program for the individual student. The IEP is a written document that includes the student’s

present educational performance, annual goals to be achieved (including short-term instructional objectives), a statement of specific services to be performed, dates for initiation and duration of services, and criteria, procedures, and schedules for evaluating whether the objectives are being achieved. (Rothstein, 2000, p. 111)

The IEP is developed at a meeting with the IEP team. The team consists of an agency representative who is to supervise the provisions of the IEP, the regular education teacher, the parent, the student (if appropriate), and other members who may provide necessary services to the student or who may have been invited by the parent. The IEP is a concrete document that confirms the decisions reached by the team to ensure a successful academic program (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). The IDEA Amendments of 1997 mandate important changes in the focus, development, and planning of the IEP. According to Walther-Thomas, “One significant change is heightened emphasis on students’ participation in the general education curriculum” (p. 217). The required changes in the disabled student’s general education classroom placement require a

paradigm shift among school personnel. Prior to this shift, it was not uncommon for the special educator to draft the IEP before the meetings were convened to make efficient use of team member's time. To comply with new legislation, team members take a more active role in the development of the plan and deliberations of members are to ensure that student needs are a team priority.

In an inclusive classroom, the IEP is a meaningful and useful document for educators. Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) cited the work of Orelove and Malatchi (1996) who conveyed an effective program planning model that contains four common features:

- “Individualized planning is emphasized” (p. 212). The planning group focuses on the goals and objectives written in the IEP.
- “The IEP is the primary program planning document” (p. 212). The IEP is a valuable working tool that reflects evidence of collaboration, creativity, and teamwork of the planning team. The IEP will be meaningful for the student.
- “Effective teaching techniques are used to achieve important student learning outcomes” (p. 212). The learning needs of the individual student are considered. Teaching methods for each skill are selected to meet the needs of the learner.
- “Individualized classroom supports and resources are established to ensure classroom success for students and adults” (p. 212). Time and attention to student needs are predicted during planning to ensure that the students and

teachers receive the necessary support. Plans are developed to measure effectiveness of all efforts.

No Child Left Behind

The primary goal of the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was to hold states and public schools accountable for improving student achievement in reading and math. NCLB affects all students in general education programs and students with disabilities. The law requires that all public school students are proficient in reading and math by the end of the 2013-2014 school year (Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shiner, 2006). Nagle, Yunker, and Malmgren (2006) added “annual achievement objectives must be determined, met, and reported for subgroups, including students with disabilities” (p. 29). The NCLB regulations determine that

adequate yearly progress (AYP) is met when three conditions are satisfied. First, not less than 95 percent of students in each subgroup must participate in state assessments at the school level. Next, all students and each subgroup of students must meet or exceed the objectives set for all students by the state. Finally, progress must be made toward increasing high school graduation at the high school level and another state-determined academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. (p. 29)

Yell et al. (2006) stated, “Congress and the President believed that to ensure that instruction and achievement for students with disabilities is improved, all students with disabilities must be assessed and the results of these assessments must be included in school data to determine if a school and district make AYP” (p. 34). If school districts

and schools are not held accountable for the academic achievement of disabled students, these students will be ignored and not receive the attention that they need.

Even though students with disabilities are assessed on the standards for their academic grade level, NCLB allows the IEP team to determine appropriate curricular and behavioral modifications and accommodations that will be needed for each child to be assessed (Yell et al., 2006). Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) added that curricular and behavioral objectives, and criteria for mastery, may vary for the disabled student. The IEP team determines and establishes the required criteria.

NCLB has mandated that states develop alternate assessments for students with disabilities who are not able to participate in the regular assessments even with allowable accommodations. The alternate assessment is limited to students with the most “significant cognitive disabilities” (Yell et al., 2006, p. 35). However, students who are assessed using the alternate assessment are included in the measurement of AYP. The use of the alternate assessment is limited by NCLB to 1% of the total school population at each grade level. Students with disabilities that are administered the alternate assessment must achieve a score of proficient to be included in the school’s AYP.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

According to Yell et al. (2006) President Bush signed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) into law on December 3, 2004. The purpose of IDEIA was to “improve educational results for children with disabilities by providing a performance driven framework for accountability to ensure that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education” (p. 36).

Carpenter and Dyal (2007) report that IDEIA “provides a performance driven system to improve educational results for children with disabilities” (p. 344). This reauthorization combined with NCLB to provide mandates of accountability for the instruction and assessment of students with disabilities. Fisher and Frey (2001) explain that simply placing disabled students in a general education classroom does not “address the needs, supports, and accommodations required by law and common sense” (p. 148). Disabled students must have access to the core general education curriculum. Fisher and Frey further state “if students with disabilities are to participate in the standards-based reform movement, access to the core curriculum is increasingly essential” (p. 148).

Inclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a reform efforts born from the old terminology of “mainstreaming and integration” (Berres et al., 1996, p. 19). Inclusion of special education students in general education classes is an important step that ensures that all children are active, fully participating members of the learning community. Berres et al. emphasized that “perhaps the most extreme practice is ‘dumping’ which occurs when students with disabilities are reassigned to general education classrooms, but neither the students nor the general education teachers receive any assistance to ensure successful learning and social outcomes” (p. 22). Inclusion students should not be distinguishable from the general population. The student with a disability should not have adults *velcroed* to their sides in the hallway, nor be sitting apart from their classmates in the classroom with an adult over

them to show them how to use supplies and materials that are different from the supplies and materials of the general population within the classroom.

Beckers and Carnes (1995) reported that inclusion can be successful in remediating academic deficits and “providing a quality education for students with disabilities while at the same time ensuring appropriate social growth and peer interactions” (p. 4). Their paper indicated that Pat Cooper, former School Superintendent of West Feliciana Parish in Louisiana, reported that during the first three years of a district wide inclusion program, standardized test scores increased by 10%. Moreover, the number of elementary students sent to the office decreased by 23%. Beckers and Carnes conducted a study during the 1994-1995 school year. The teachers selected seventeen students with mild disabilities to participate in an inclusion program. The students remained in the general education classroom for all academic areas. The special education teacher and/or trained paraprofessional provided curricular modifications and individual assistance for each student. The same assistance was provided to non-disabled students in the classrooms who were considered to be at-risk. The results of their study revealed tremendous progress.

All of the students had progressed socially and academically (on grade level); parental support had increased phenomenally; and general and special education teachers were working together as a team to provide a maximized quality education for students with learning disabilities. (p. 9)

Collaboration

As stated by Villa and Thousand (1996), the basis for collaboration is positive social interdependence. Collaboration in schools enables school personnel to meet “diverse student needs through shared expertise and ownership of problem definitions and solutions” (p. 170).

The terms *consultation*, *collaborative consultation*, and *collaboration* needed clarification for general education and special education teachers as they began to redefine their roles and work during the late 1980s to late 1990s (Friend & Cook, 1996). The term *collaboration* is most likely mentioned when professional interactions or innovations in special education services are discussed. According to Friend and Cook, colleagues might collaborate when interventions need to be developed for special education students. For the purpose of my study, the definition of collaboration is taken from Friend and Cook stating that it is “a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (p. 6). Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) added that the contributors to the collaborative team bring different skills and contributions that strengthen the relationship. The collaborative process involves joint responsibility and interdependence. A working *collaborative consultation* model would recognize the expertise of the special education teacher and the instructional knowledge of the general education teacher. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 105-17, passed in 1997, along with continued reform, became a catalyst for effective, productive collaboration.

Friend and Cook (1996) identified “defining characteristics” of collaboration. The identified characteristics was used as the research basis for this study.

1. Collaboration is voluntary. Even though a school has adopted programs, unless professionals choose to collaborate, they will not do so.

Administrative arrangements may require staff to work in close proximity, but the individuals will decide if a collaborative style will be used in their interactions. “In our work in schools we often emphasize that there is no such thing as collaboration by coercion” (p.7).
2. Collaboration requires parity among participants. Parity is described as interaction that is equally valued and each person has equal power in making decisions. If one person is perceived to have greater power or knowledge, collaboration cannot occur.
3. Collaboration is based on mutual goals. “Individuals who collaborate must share at least one goal” (p. 8). The shared goal should be specific and important enough to maintain shared vision.
4. Collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making. Participation does not necessarily mean equally divided tasks. It means a convenient division of labor.
5. Collaboration requires individuals to share their resources. Time and availability to carry out tasks may be one type of resource. Another type of resource may be knowledge of a special technique or skill.

6. Collaboration requires individuals to share accountability of outcomes.

“Whether the results of collaborative endeavors are positive or negative, all participating individuals are accountable for the outcomes” (p. 9).

Villa and Thousand (1996) discussed barriers to collaboration that may inhibit a productive collaborative relationship. The barriers may include “(a) inadequate teacher preparation; (b) ineffective organizational structures, policies, and procedures; (c) loss of the familiar dominant school culture; and (d) poor leadership” (p. 171).

Co-Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms

Students removed from the regular education classroom and taught in a special education resource classroom do not have access to the grade level core curriculum and instruction from content area general education teacher. Kohler-Evans (2006) noted that schools have incorporated methods of co-teaching to meet the needs of the special education student in the regular classroom. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffy (2007) determined that “co-teaching usually consists of one general education teacher paired with one special education teacher in an inclusive classroom of general education and special education students” (p. 392). Scruggs et al. described several variations of a co-teaching relationship. These include:

- Drifting, where one teacher (usually the general education teacher) assumes teaching responsibilities and the special education teacher provides individual support as needed.
- Station teaching, where various learning stations are created, and the co-teachers provide individual support at the different stations.

- Parallel teaching, where teachers teach the same or similar content in different classroom groupings.
- Alternative teaching, where one teacher may take a smaller group of students to a different location for a limited period of time for specialized instruction.
- Team teaching (or interactive teaching), where both co-teachers share teaching responsibilities equally and are involved in leading instructional activities. (p. 393)

Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, and McDuffie (2005) reviewed several case studies regarding the implementation of co-teaching practices in a variety of contexts. The case studies were conducted in upper elementary and middle school Earth Science inclusive classes, middle school Social Studies inclusive classes, and high school World History inclusive classes. Teams of teachers, one special education and one general education, were observed co-teaching in the classrooms. According to Mastropieri and her colleagues, the teams of teachers appeared to have outstanding working relationships, strengths as student motivators, time to co-plan, strong curriculum, effective instructional skills, “exceptional disability-specific teaching adaptations, and expertise in the content area” (p. 263). Findings from the case studies revealed that the interaction between course content and teacher knowledge had substantial influence on the co-teaching relationship. If the special education teacher was not as familiar with course content, the role of the special education teacher became that of an assistant. However, when the special education teacher was stronger with course content, shared

teaching responsibilities were more equitable. The studies also revealed that “the relationship between the co-teachers is a major critical component influencing the success or failure of the inclusion of students with disabilities” (p. 268). A healthy co-teaching relationship between the special education teacher and general education teacher appeared to be built on trust and respect for the professional expertise of each other.

In a study conducted by Kohler-Evans (2006) on the attitudes and concerns of secondary teachers, several factors were revealed to be important to the teachers surveyed. The teachers indicated common planning time to be the most important feature in a co-teaching relationship. Additionally, a positive working relationship with the co-teaching partners was rated second and shared responsibility and philosophy was rated third. Teachers in this study stated that co-teaching reaches more students, provides better student care, it is fun, and the support of a second adult is invaluable.

Scruggs et al. (2007) reviewed 23 co-teaching case studies. The research revealed that in most of the case studies, the special education teacher was typically “responsible for modifying instruction, behavior management, and monitoring student progress; whereas the general education teacher was responsible for the content of instruction” (p. 393). It was noted that this research indicated that a successful co-teaching relationship would be dependent upon “the general education teacher’s attitude, sufficient planning time, voluntary participation, mutual respect, administrative support, and a shared philosophy of instruction and behavior management” (p. 393).

Fisher and Frey (2001) conducted a study to determine if including special education students in the general curriculum with appropriate curriculum

accommodations and modifications would result in improved skills. The results of the study indicated that special education students can be successful in core curriculum if appropriate personal and technological supports are provided. One important outcome of this study was the collaboration between the general and special education teachers. They met regularly to discuss lessons which resulted in improved content and instructional delivery processes for all students.

Training

Professional training is typically provided for medical practitioners, school psychologists, and counselors (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). However, training programs are “less often provided for special education teachers and even more limited for general educators” (p. 181).

The need for teacher training in co-teaching in inclusive classrooms is a common theme mentioned in research. Scruggs et al. (2007) reported on Vesay’s 2004 study indicating the needs of a preschool co-teacher. The co-teacher stated that she was not prepared for collaborative teaching. She admitted that she was frightened about the relationship and had no background in co-teaching experiences. Other teachers in this study indicated that they needed training to “promote learning more flexible thinking, strategies and practical skill development, different teaching models, use of technology, characteristics of disabilities, collaborative consultation skills, group interpersonal skills, and communicating more effectively” (p. 404).

Friend and Cook (1996) reported on two decades of research on professional development that is useful to educators. Their research suggested that principles of adult

learning and needs assessments will guide schools in meeting their needs for professional development. Three suggestions were listed for consideration:

1. staff development should be linked to school culture
2. involve teachers in all aspects of the staff development program
3. combine effective training strategies with strategies derived from knowledge about adult learners (p. 67).

Darling-Hammond (1997) conclude there should be a high degree of professional sharing for educators to be successful. Special education teachers and general education teachers within the school can utilize quality professional development to learn and improve their collaborative techniques.

In a study at the University of Michigan, the researcher determined that teachers' access to high quality professional development affected their ability to implement reforms in a way that improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond, as cited in Sparks, 2002, p. 34). Academic success will occur if educators are prepared to meet the needs of all students. Effective professional development and change in student achievement occurred through reflection on beliefs about content, pedagogy, and the learners.

School Culture-Role of the Administrator

The success of innovations aimed at the improvement of educational programs and student learning depend not only on the active involvement of the participants, but also on the leadership capabilities of the principal. Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) noted that "critical elements to effective leadership include the ability to establish direction,

align key participants, motivate and inspire others, and produce useful change in the organization” (p. 30). The school principal as the instructional leader will establish the school mission and vision, promote the instructional culture and climate, and manage all aspects of student learning. An effective principal will establish a collaborative climate of improved teaching and learning for students with special needs. The principal does this by communicating and modeling a vision of teacher collaboration, providing professional development, providing resources and time, and recognizing and celebrating teacher and student accomplishments.

According to Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006), “Effectively achieving an integrated special education program within the general education environment involves the principal providing the necessary vision. In fact, principals are the key in making special education succeed or fail” (p. 569).

A study was conducted by Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) to evaluate leadership in special education. Principals in Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming participated in a survey to determine supportive leadership of special education and inclusion. The result of the study indicated that most of the principals who responded was “making special education and affected students part of a unified educational system” (p. 578). The survey determined that in order to accomplish this leadership task, principals “communicate this mission, manage curriculum and instruction, supervise both regular and special teaching, monitor all students’ progress, and promote a positive and accepting instructional climate” (p. 578).

Praisner (2003) ascertained that for inclusion to be successful; the school administrator should exhibit behaviors that encourage the “integration, acceptance, and success of students with disabilities in general education classes (p. 135). Praisner conducted a study to determine the attitude of elementary school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. The participants in this study were 408 elementary school principals in Pennsylvania. The principals completed a survey to determine variables that influence their attitude. Additionally, the impact of their attitude on the perceived most appropriate placements for students with disabilities were measured. Results of the study indicate that principals with a “more positive attitude toward inclusion were more likely to believe that less restrictive placements were most appropriate for students with disabilities” (p. 141).

Mattie T. et al. v. Johnson

In 1975 a class action lawsuit was filed on “behalf of all school age children in the state of Mississippi who are disabled or regarded by their Local Education Agency as disabled” (Official, Signed Mattie T Consent Decree). This Decree became known as the Mattie T. Consent Decree (MTCD). The action challenged the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to ensure that school districts provided appropriate educational services to students with disabilities. In 1979, a Consent Decree was entered into by the parties. “For over twenty years, the MDE utterly failed to comply with the requirements of the original Decree” (Southern Poverty Law Center website www.splcenter.org). Today, this Decree still governs identification and placement of special education students. In 2003 the parties entered a Consent Decree that will be in effect until 2011.

The new Decree “requires districts to improve in the areas of Child Find, Least Restrictive Environment, and Nondiscriminatory Assessment of Minority Students for Special Education” (Southern Poverty Law Center website www.splcenter.org).

Hank Bounds, State Superintendent of Education, stated in an April 30, 2008 Memorandum to school superintendents

It is the responsibility of all local districts to substantially comply with the MTCD’s Child Find, Non-discriminatory Assessment of Minority Students for Special Education and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements by the end of the 2009-2010 school year. In addition to the 2009-2010 targets, the Department established goals in the areas of Child Find, Non-discriminatory Assessment and LRE so that each school district can be working toward achieving substantial compliance with the 2009-2010 targets. It is important that you, as the superintendent, understand these annual goals and take the measures necessary to attain these goals in order to obtain substantial compliance within the time frame of the MTCD (p. 1).

School districts in the state of Mississippi have been mandated by the State Superintendent of Education to “provide high quality instruction in the most inclusive settings” (p. 3). The urgency of including special education students in the general education sparks an insistence for appropriate collaboration to ensure academic success.

Chapter Summary

Clearly, there is a lack of research concerning collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. Research

studies have been conducted to determine if including special education students was successful. Few studies have been conducted to determine the implementation of the defining characteristics of collaboration as defined by Friend and Cook (1996).

My study adds to the literature related to the collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. This study is unique in that it looks specifically at the collaboration between the special education teachers and the general education teachers in one school while other studies have had a different focus.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Case Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how special education teachers and general education teachers in inclusive classrooms collaborate regarding the needs of the students. The participants for this study were four special education teachers, four general education teachers, and the administrator in one elementary school located in Mississippi.

Merriam (1998) described a case study as an “intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system such as an individual, program, event group, intervention, or community” (p. 19). A qualitative case study results in a thick rich, descriptive account of the phenomenon studied. A qualitative research study can reveal meaning that is embedded in the experiences of people. A single elementary school was used for this study. As Glesne (2006) stated, “case studies vary from studies involving one person, to those involving whole villages...” (p. 13). Therefore, the teachers in this case study were viewed as the *whole village* to examine the following phenomenon: collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. This case study required me to interact with special education teachers, general education teachers, and the principal through interviews and observations.

Qualitative research utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Since I collected the data for this qualitative study and served as the primary instrument for data collection, it is important to describe my background, which may have influenced data collection and interpretation. I have been involved with the public education system in Mississippi for 22 years.

I began my career as a special education teacher in 1981. I taught various grade levels, and children with various disabilities. I served as a special education teacher in five different schools and three school districts. I accumulated a total of 13 years of experience as a special education teacher. My experiences as a special education teacher were exciting and frustrating. The excitement that I experienced was twined with the reason that I became a special education teacher- to see handicapped children achieve academic skills. The frustration was revealed with the battles that I encountered on behalf of my students to be treated equally. During the 13 years, I participated in many changes that were mandated through State and Governmental agencies. My classroom experiences evolved from pull-out, which was the term used to describe when students would be pulled-out of general education classrooms for short periods of time. A few years later, the terminology changed to mainstreaming. At that time, mainstreaming was defined as students receiving academic instruction from the special education teacher for academically weak areas. The special education student would be mainstreamed into the general education classroom during academic instruction in the areas that did not require academic accommodations or modifications. Finally, during the last few years of my

teaching experience, schools moved to majority self-contained classrooms. In my case, there were multiple grade levels (and abilities) of students who were assigned to my classroom all day. I was expected to simultaneously provide multiple grade levels of instruction in a variety of subject areas. The unrealistic expectations during my last few years of special education teaching the self-contained classroom created the greatest amount of personal frustration. I felt as though my students and I were treated as unequals within the school. I began to feel overwhelmed as an educator and began to seek other career avenues.

In 1999, I received my Master's Degree in school counseling and served six years as a school counselor in a rural, minority middle school. This role provided me the opportunity and experience to learn the importance of effective collaboration with teachers. In 2005, I became an Exceptional Education Learning Specialist for a large, urban school district. The position of Learning Specialist required me to oversee the exceptional education programs at 15 elementary schools. I collaborated with school administrators, counselors, teachers, social workers, psychologists, and parents to ensure appropriate educational and behavioral programming for special education students. Finally, in 2006 I became an assistant principal of an elementary school. This position is where I currently served during this study. As a school administrator, I collaborated with special education teachers and general education teachers, parents of special education students and general education students, and a diverse group of students who were from a variety of ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Qualitative research involves fieldwork which requires the researcher to physically go to the research site to observe people in their natural setting (Merriam, 1998). It “seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in context perceive them” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 14). To obtain a deeper understanding of the collaboration between the special education teachers and the general education teachers in King Elementary School (pseudonym), I went to the school and conducted in-depth interviews and observations with the special education teachers, general education teachers, and the school principal.

Biases

My background may have an effect on my personal biases in relation to this research. Yin (2003) stated that major problems are related to potential biases produced. For example, the investigator may assume positions or “advocate roles contrary to the interest of good scientific practice” (p. 94). As an administrator, I constantly observed and evaluated teachers as they instructed students. I engaged in collaborative conversation with teachers regarding teaching strategies or classroom management skills. During the data collection for this study, I focused on the establish set of questions and observation criteria designed for the study to maintain focus on the study. I continually reminded myself that my purpose was not that of an administrator, but that of a researcher. I took these steps to ensure that my research study would not be biased.

Permission, Site Entry, and Exit

Entry to this school site was obtained by meeting with the school principal to discuss my research and ask if she would be willing to participate in the study. I also gave her an overview of the study. She willingly agreed to participate. The policy of the school district required that central office approval must be obtained prior to conducting research in a school or classroom. Therefore, I met with the district's Director of Accountability and Research and secured permission to conduct my research study in the Royal School District (pseudonym). I gave him an overview of the study, which included the methods and purpose for the study and a letter requesting written consent to conduct the research. I received a letter of approval from the school district. Then, I submitted an application to the Office of Human Subjects at Mississippi State University requesting permission to conduct this study. Permission was granted from the Mississippi State University Office of Human Subjects (Appendix A). Finally, I contacted the school principal and informed her that permission to conduct the study had been granted by the district and Mississippi State University. A date was scheduled for me to meet with the entire teaching staff of King Elementary School (pseudonym) to explain the study. During the meeting, teachers who met the criteria for the study were asked to volunteer for participation in this study. Eight general education teachers, four special education teachers, and the school principal signed Consent Forms (Appendix B) agreeing to participate in this study.

I went to the school several times during the months of March and April of 2008. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the special education teachers, the general education teachers, and the school principal. I also observed in one inclusive classroom,

one team meeting, and one IEP meeting. I communicated with the teachers and principal through email, telephone, and in person. On the final day of my data collection, I expressed my sincere appreciation to each participant for their willingness to participate in this study.

Participant Selection

This researcher chose a purposive sampling of teachers for this study. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), purposive samples are chosen to ensure a variety of types of subjects are included. A researcher chooses particular subjects “because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 65). Merriam (1998) added, “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). Participant criteria for this study required special education teacher participants and general education teacher participants must teach in inclusive classrooms for at least part of the school day, and the school administrator who makes decisions for the school regarding special education programming and establishes the vision and culture of the school. The sample chosen for this study consisted of four general education teachers who had inclusion students in their classroom, four special education teachers who provided specialized instruction in inclusive classrooms and in a special education classroom, and developed IEPs for the special education students. Additionally, the school principal was selected to participate. Special education teachers and general education teachers were eliminated as potential participants because they did not meet the established criteria.

Special Education Teacher Participants

This study included four special education teachers who volunteered to participate. Each of the special education participants provided information regarding their personal and professional background. Table 3.1 describes each special education teacher and her background information. All of the special education teacher participants are female. The gender selection was not a design of the study, but the make-up of the school. The names of the special education teachers referred to in this study are pseudonyms.

Table 3.1

Special Education Teacher Participants

Teacher	Age	Race	Years Teaching	Degree	Area of Certification	Number of Students	Disabilities Served
Jonas	55	W	19	B.S.	EMR, TMR, LD, PH	9	EMR, TMR, DD, PH, VI
Denver	52	B	31	M.Ed.	Mild/Moderate	14	EMR, MH, SLD, EMD, AUTISTIC
Harris	40	B	10	B.S.	Mild/Moderate	5	DD
Tinsel	35	B	12	M.Ed.	Mild/Moderate Administration	20	SLD, DD, OHI

Ms. Jonas (pseudonym) is a 55-year-old Caucasian female who has been teaching special education for 19 years. She is friendly and outgoing, with a willing nature and a warm smile. She dressed casually professional in slacks and a blouse, and comfortable shoes. She told me that she began her career in private school to establish a special

education program. She stated numerous times that she loves children and wants to always ensure they succeed to the best of their ability. Ms. Jonas has a B.S. Degree, and is certified in the following areas: Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR), Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and Physically Handicapped (PH). She currently has nine students on her class roster. Five of the nine students will be alternately assessed for State-Wide testing. The other four students are not in the required testing grade levels.

Ms. Denver (pseudonym) is a 52-year-old African American female who has been teaching special education for 31 years. She is friendly and open in her discussions. She welcomed me very warmly into her classroom on every occasion. Each time that I visited the school, she dressed comfortably, but professional. She told me that she chose teaching younger children because she wanted to “get them while they are young” then they can be “molded and built up”. Ms. Denver has a Master’s Degree and is certified in the area of Mild/Moderate. She was very proud to add that she is a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She currently has 14 students on her class roster and six of them will be alternately assessed for State-Wide testing.

Ms. Tinsel (pseudonym) is a 35-year-old African American female who has been teaching special education for 12 years. She is friendly and soft-spoken, and appeared very serious about her students and their needs. She dressed professionally in a dress or skirt with matching shoes. Ms. Tinsel has a Bachelors and a Masters Degree and her certification is Mild/Moderate and Educational Administration. She currently has twenty students on her class roster. The majority of her students are SLD, but she has one that is

Developmentally Delayed (DD) and three that are Other Health Impaired (OHI). All of her students will take the May 2008 administration of the Mississippi Curriculum Test-2 with the accommodations and modifications that are included in each student's IEP.

Ms. Harris (pseudonym) is a 40-year-old African American female and, has been teaching for 10 years. She is friendly and soft-spoken but appeared intent on the task at hand. She dressed casually, professional and wore comfortable shoes. Ms. Harris has a Bachelors Degree and is certified in the area of Mild/Moderate. She currently has five students on her class roster that are Developmentally Disabled. Her students are ages three years to five years. Ms. Harris has one student who is included in a regular kindergarten class for part of the school day.

General Education Teacher Participants and School Principal

This study included four general education teachers and the school principal who volunteered to participate in this study. Each of the general education participants provided information regarding their personal and professional background. Table 3.2 describes each general education teacher and her background information. All of the general education teacher participants and the school principal are females. The gender selection was not a design of the study, but the make-up of the school. The school has one male teacher. However, he did not meet the criteria established for this study. The names used in this study for the general education teachers and the school principal are pseudonyms.

Table 3.2

General Education Teacher Participants and the School Principal

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Years Teaching</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Area of Certification</i>	<i>Total Number of Students</i>	<i>Number of Sp. Ed. Students</i>
Agnew	54	W	21	B.S.	Elem. Ed.	27	3
Baker	62	W	32	M.Ed.	Elem. Ed.	21	2
Carly	25	W	3	B.S.	Elem. Ed.	22	1
Davidson	57	W	30	B.S.	Elem. Ed.	27	3
Regal	37	W	15	Ed.S	Elem. Ed./Adm	442	59

Ms. Agnew (pseudonym) is a 54-year-old Caucasian female and teaches first grade at King Elementary School. She has been teaching for 21 years and has taught first grade for 6 years. She also has experience teaching fifth grade and middle school. She dresses professionally and had a willing smile. Ms. Agnew has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher. She currently has 27 students on her roll, and three of them are special education students.

Ms. Baker (pseudonym) is a 62-year-old Caucasian female who teaches second grade at King Elementary School. She has been teaching for 32 years. She stated that she has spent most of her "years in education teaching either second or third grade." Ms. Baker was soft spoken and appeared quite knowledgeable of her students. She was well dressed, and adorned with matching jewelry. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in School Administration. Ms. Baker has 27 students on her roll; two of them are special education students.

Ms. Carly (pseudonym) is a 25-year-old Caucasian female who teaches third grade at King Elementary School. She has taught third grade for the three years of her teaching career. Ms. Carly was very soft spoken and dressed comfortably professional. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. There are 22 students on her roll with one of them being a special education student.

Ms. Davidson (pseudonym) is a 57-year-old Caucasian female who is a fifth grade teacher at King Elementary School. She has been teaching for 30 years, and 20 of those years have been at the fifth grade level. Ms. Davidson spoke very firmly and emphatically regarding her students. She was animated at times and laughed often. She appeared to enjoy describing her students and herself as a professional. She dressed in a comfortable professional manner. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. There are 27 students on her roll and three of them are special education students.

School Principal

The principal of King Elementary School is Ms. Regal (pseudonym). Ms. Regal is a 37-year-old Caucasian female. She has been a school administrator for seven years. She has been principal of King Elementary School for three years. Ms. Regal is very friendly and laughs often. She is quite proud of the teachers and students at King Elementary School. Ms. Regal has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, a Master's degree in Elementary Education, a Master's degree in Education Leadership, and a Specialist's degree in Education Leadership. Prior to becoming a principal, Ms. Regal taught for eight years in grades three through six.

King Elementary School

King Elementary School (pseudonym) is where this study took place. King Elementary is a K-5 school located in a large city in Mississippi. The school is centered in a heavy populated middle class neighborhood. The houses in the neighborhood appear to be well maintained and are approximately 16 to 18 hundred square feet. The houses in the neighborhood are reminders of houses that were built during the early 1970s. The students who attend the school come from within a ten minute riding radius from the school; however, many students live close enough to walk. The school has a crossing guard who assists children in safely crossing the street each morning and afternoon. The school building is obviously several decades old. However, it is very clean and well maintained.

During the 2007-2008 school year, King Elementary had a student enrollment of 465 students. Student enrollment totals are listed in Figure 3.3 (MDE website, www.mde.k12.ms.us).

Table 3.3

King Elementary Enrollment

Grade	Total Enrollment	Male	Female
PK	5	4	1
K	66	34	32
1	78	34	44
2	75	49	26
3	67	30	37
4	77	30	37
5	74	38	36

During the 2007-2008 school year, King Elementary School had four special education teachers and a speech pathologist. The special education teachers had a total of 59 students on their class rolls. The school provides special education services to students with a variety of disabilities. The identified disabilities at King Elementary School are noted in Table 3.4 (MDE website, www.mde.k12.ms.us). King Elementary School has numerous teachers for each grade level and each specialty area. There are 18 classroom teachers, four special education teachers, one part-time speech pathologist, one teacher for gifted education, one school counselor, one music teacher, one librarian, one literacy coach, and one principal. King Elementary School has two District-Wide classes that serve the northern zone of the district. One class is for Developmentally Delayed students, ages three years to six years, and one class for Multi-Handicapped Children.

Students, district-wide, who qualify for the Multi-Handicapped class, meet the qualifications for Specific Cognitive Disabled (SCD) as established by IDEA.

Table 3.4

Special Education Enrollment at King Elementary School

Disability	Total
Autism	3
Developmentally Delayed	9
Educable Mentally Retarded	5
Emotional Disability	1
Language/Speech	16
Multiple Disability	2
Other Health Impaired	3
Specific Learning Disability	19
Trainable Mentally Retarded	1
Total	59

Mississippi Curriculum Test

The Mississippi State Curriculum Test (MCT) was given to all Mississippi students in grades two through eight during the 2006-2007 school year. The MCT meets the requirements mandated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* for state-wide testing.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the purpose of state assessments required under *No Child Left Behind* is to provide an independent insight

into each child's progress, as well as the progress for each school. The point of state assessments is to measure student learning. During the 2006-2007 school year, scores on the MCT were reported for academic performance in the areas of reading, language, and mathematics. The scores for King Elementary are demonstrated below in Table 3.5 (MDE website, www.mde.k12.ms.us/ors/).

Table 3.5
MCT Scores at King Elementary School

Grade Level	% Minimal	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced
Reading				
2	2.7	9.6	60.3	27.4
3	11.0	7.3	56.1	25.6
4	8.4	2.4	63.9	25.3
5	4.5	4.5	67.2	23.9
Language				
2	5.5	11.0	35.6	47.9
3	8.5	14.6	37.8	39.0
4	3.0	13.3	43.4	37.3
5	0.0	13.4	67.2	19.4

Table continues

Table 3.5 continued

Grade Level	% Minimal	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced
Mathematics				
2	0.0	4.1	50.7	45.2
3	2.4	8.5	52.4	36.6
4	6.0	8.4	42.2	43.4
5	3.0	20.9	43.3	32.8

Test scores are reported by performance levels in the state of Mississippi. A student who scores at the minimal level does not demonstrate mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success. These students require additional instruction and remediation in the basic skills that are necessary for success at the grade level tested. A student who scores at the basic level demonstrates partial mastery of the content knowledge. Remediation may be necessary for these students. Students who scores at the level of proficient, demonstrates solid academic performance and mastery of the content knowledge and skills. Students who perform at this level are well prepared to begin working on more challenging work. Students who score at the level or advanced are clearly beyond grade level in the area tested (MDE, online).

King Elementary School's school performance classification was level 4, an exemplary school, based on the achievement and growth model mandated by *No Child Left Behind*. The school also met adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all academic areas tested. The

attendance rate at the school was 97% for the year. All of the teachers at King Elementary were highly qualified during the 2006-2007 school year (MDE website, www.k12.ms.us/ors/).

Royal School District

Royal School District (pseudonym) is one of the largest districts in the state of Mississippi. The district is composed of 38 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 8 high schools and 3 special schools. State-wide assessment resulted in 6 schools rated as level 5 (superior), 14 schools rated as level 4 (exemplary), 28 schools rated as level 3 (successful), 7 schools rated as level 2 (underperforming), and no schools are rated level 1 (underperforming). During the 2007-2008 school year, there were approximately 31,000 students in grades K-12. The district student enrollment consists of 97.7% African Americans, 1.65% Caucasians, 0.61% Hispanic, 0.18% Asians, and 0.02% Native Americans. The students are 50.2% male and 49.8% female (district website, www.jackson.k12.ms.us).

Royal School District's Office of Special Education "provides a variety of support services to students with disabilities and regular education students" (District Handbook, p. 15). The Special Education data profile is shown in Table 3.6 (MDE website, www.mde.k12.ms.us/ACAD/osa/index.html).

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection typically involves a number of different data collection strategies. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), the three primary data

collection techniques are observing, interviewing, and examining records. As part of this study, direct observations and face-to-face interviews were conducted. According to Yin (2003), “some relevant behaviors or environmental conditions will be available for observation” (p. 92). These observations will be a source of evidence in a case study. The observations provide a check on what has been reported in the interviews. Interviews, as stated by Bogdan and Biklan (2003), are used to “gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (p. 95).

Table 3.6

Royal School District Special Education Data Profile

Total Student Enrollment	31,191
Number of Students with Disabilities	3,302
Percent of Students with Disabilities	10.59%
Percent of Students who are Black	97.54%
Percent of Students Enrolled in Other Racial Groups	2.46%
Percent of Students with Disabilities (as a percent of the total enrollment)	
• Autism	0.14%
• Deaf-Blind	0.00%
• Developmentally Delayed (DD)	0.29%
• Emotional Disturbance (EMD)	0.24%
• Hearing Impaired (HI)	0.07%
• Mentally Retarded (MR)	1.00%

Table Continues

Table 3.6 (continued)

• Educable Mentally Retarded (is included in percentage above) (EMR)	0.85%
• Language/Speech (L/S)	1.73%
• Multiple Disabilities (MH)	0.18%
• Other Health Impaired (OHI)	0.74%
• Orthopedically Impaired (PH)	0.05%
• Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)	6.07%
• Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	0.03%
• Visual Impairments (VI)	0.02%

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted during the second semester of the 2007-2008 school year. Semi-structured interviews allow for consistency in the structure of the questions, while at the same time permit some flexibility to ask clarifying questions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using an established protocol to guide the discussion with the teachers. A separate protocol was used for each group of teachers, special education and general education, and the school principal. The question protocol that was used for the special education teachers can be viewed in Appendix C. The general education teacher question protocol can be viewed in Appendix D, and the administrator protocol can be viewed in Appendix D. Merriam (1998) explains that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 72). The researcher and the teachers discussed collaboration. Questions were asked of each teacher and the principal regarding the concepts of collaboration. The questions were designed to determine if the teachers

collaborated regarding the academic and behavioral needs of the special education students that are in inclusive classrooms.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with four general education teachers, four special education teachers and the school principal. The interviews typically lasted forty-five minutes to an hour in length. The interviews took place at King Elementary School either during the teacher's planning time, or after school hours, whichever was most convenient for the teacher. The interviews were audio-recorded, with the teacher's permission, and transcribed. The interviews were audio-recorded so that when the notes were transcribed I could listen to the interview once again to ensure that I correctly transcribed the conversation. Transcripts were printed and given to each participant to review for accuracy. Quotations from the interviews are a part of my thick description of the data.

Observations were conducted on three occasions during the second semester. I observed in one classroom, one grade-level team meeting, and one IEP meeting. Observations were conducted after the interviews had been completed. I wanted to conduct the observations after the interviews to determine if the information that I obtained during the interviews was observable. For each observation, I recorded field notes using pen and paper. The field notes describe in detail the classroom, teachers, students, and other information observed. Merriam (1998) contends that field notes may be jotted down during the observation and details can be added after the observation. This method assisted me in remaining unobtrusive while in the classroom. Detailed notes from

the observation were typed after the observation to increase the likelihood of providing rich details.

Role of the Researcher

In order to fit into the classroom during the classroom observation, I met the class as they were walking down the hallway. I engaged in brief conversation with the students as we walked. Several students inquired about my visit. I explained that I was there to watch them and their teacher because I knew that they were the best class at King Elementary School. This brief conversation elicited broad smiles and paved the way for me to enter the classroom as unobtrusively as possible. During the observations, I sat in the back of the classroom the entire time. On a few occasions, students would look back at me with interest. I would simply smile at them to acknowledge their interest. Then, they would continue with their work.

During the observation of the grade-level team meeting, and the observation of the IEP meeting, I sat away from the group in order to remain as unobtrusive as possible. However, I sat close enough to the group to ensure accurate recording of information. I jotted field notes and conversation so that I could type an accurate account of the meetings.

Data Analysis

A benefit of qualitative methodology is that data analysis is ongoing (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Since multiple sources of data are obtained, triangulation was used. Triangulation, according to Merriam (1998) “uses multiple sources of data or

multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (p. 204). I analyzed data collected to determine what was consistently being said and observed. This established a chain of evidence (Yin, 2003) by which findings were verified. Data were analyzed to establish a paper trail through observation field notes and interview transcriptions to consistently determine what is being observed, said, and documented.

The constant comparative method of data analysis is described by Merriam (1998) as a means of constantly comparing data obtained from each interview, observations, and documents and comparing it with data obtained from another incident. The data collected in this study utilize this method of comparing data as it was collected. As I jotted down field notes, during interviews and observations, I would note an “observer comment” as “OC”. During my review of notes and interview transcriptions, the OC notes guided me toward remembering particular issues of body language, facial expressions, etc. that assisted with the analysis of data or reminded me to seek deeper understanding of what had been observed or stated.

Periodically, I read through the data to identify pervasive ideas, questions, and concerns. After reviewing the data, I wrote memos to myself to record my interpretations and feelings that emerged from the data (Merriam, 1998). For example after, the interview with Ms. Denver, I wrote, “Ms. Denver appears cautious. She answers the questions very specifically and does not appear comfortable with opening up in conversation. Her answers seem to be answers that would be given on a test or assignment, rather than conversation.”

Coding the Data

After each day of data collection, the data were coded and categorized using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method is a continuous searching process of comparing data across and within categories to find patterns and themes in the data. The constant comparative method was begun in the field as data were collected. During data collection and the analysis after the data were collected, I constantly perused the data for categories and themes. I established categorization codes for the data. For example, the interviews with the special education teachers were coded “SEI” (special education interview). The interviews with the general education teachers were coded “GEI” (general education interview). The six defining characteristics of collaboration were coded by teacher, then a letter. For example, a special education teacher that is discussing the characteristic of goals would be coded (SEI-G). In keeping with this system of codes, the observations were coded simply as “O” since they consisted of mixed groups. Then, I added the code of “C” for classroom, “T” for team meeting, and “IEP” for the IEP meeting. Data collected from the principal was coded as “P”. As I collected the data, I would add my personal feelings, reactions, hunches, or questions in the margin areas and code them as “OC” (observer’s comments). I remained conscious of and noted any subjective feelings during my observations by writing “SF” for subjectivity in my field notes (Glesne, 1999).

Interviews and observations were reviewed as the data were collected. Researcher notes and comments were documented on the interview pages as they were transcribed, since patterns emerged during transcription. According to Glesne (2006) “the most

widely used means of data analysis is thematic analysis which is a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into clumps for further analysis and description” (p. 147). The categories and subcategories were derived from themes that emerged in the observations, interviews, and field notes. Data analysis for this study utilized this method to identify specific categories that emerged in the data. These categories were coded and placed in a framework. Merriam (1998) added that categories and subcategories are constructed through constant comparative methods of data analysis.

At the end of the data collection stage, I organized 56 pages of interviews, 19 pages of observation notes, and 12 pages of field notes. The field notes were developed to expand the observation notes by giving a more descriptive account of the observable context and emotional dispositions obtained during the observation. The data were double spaced, and the pages and lines were numbered to ensure that segments of data could be separated and reconnected to the original data during analysis. Hard copies of the data were organized alphabetically in a loose-leaf binder, which enabled me to locate the data.

After the data were organized, I utilized Bogdan’s and Biklen’s (2003) suggestion and began the formal data analysis phase by reading over all the data numerous times. As I read, I developed the list of codes to identify data segments. Some of the data segments related to more than one code.

Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Transferability

Qualitative researchers view reliability and validity differently than quantitative researchers (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers believe that there is no one reality because reality is a concept determined by the individual. Gay et al. (2006)

claim that trustworthiness in qualitative research is the “degree to which the qualitative data we collect accurately gauge what we are trying to measure” (p. 403). They also state that trustworthiness can be addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Merriam (1998) asserted that being able to trust research is important, especially in the field of education where practitioners are involved in people’s lives.

In this research study, I established trustworthiness and credibility by using the basic strategies described by Gay et al. (2006). I used several methods of data collection; observation, determining researcher biases, peer review, and triangulation. I established an audit trail (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998) to maintain accurate records of the interviews and observations. Field notes with reflections were developed to further maintain accurate data. Researcher bias was on the forefront of data collection at all times. I explained my qualifications to the participants at the beginning of the data collection. I also clarified my assumptions with the participants during the course of the data collection.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered as this study is read.

1. This study only has a narrow scope, because I examined the collaboration in one school.
2. This study only examined one elementary school.
3. The influence of my presence on the teachers’ actions and the interactions between teachers and students is not known.

4. The statements made by teachers during the interviews may not be conclusive because there is no absolute method to determine truthfulness.
5. Observations and interviews discussed are only a slice of the phenomenon. Other methods of data collection or analysis would prove different perspectives on the phenomenon.

Summary

In this chapter, I described how I used a case study research design to describe, analyze, and interpret reoccurring themes and patterns that emerged across cases in this study. I discussed the criteria for site participation selection, and the process I used for gaining access to the site and for receiving consent. Then I presented the qualitative research techniques that were used to gather data. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and observations. Next, the data analysis process was presented, which included a discussion of how I utilized the constant comparative method to analyze the data. Finally, I discussed issues of trustworthiness and credibility, my background and biases, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms. In this chapter, the results and findings will be discussed and organized by research questions and the defining characteristics of collaboration as defined by Friend and Cook (1996). The research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do special education teachers collaborate when working with general education teachers?

Research Question 2: How do general education teachers collaborate, when working with special education teachers?

The research questions were analyzed using the six defining characteristics of collaboration as described by Friend and Cook (1996). The defining characteristics are: (a) collaboration is voluntary; (b) collaboration requires parity among participants; (c) collaboration is based on mutual goals; (d) collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making; (e) individuals who collaborate share their resources; (f) individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes.

Findings

The data analyzed came from participant interviews, observations, and field notes. The data was presented in tabular format for each research question with explanation provided for each question. The findings are discussed by combining the two research questions along with the six defining characteristics for collaboration as described by Friend and Cook (1996). For each of the six characteristics, there is a discussion of data analysis from the special education teacher, a discussion of the data analysis from the general education teacher, the school principal, and the observations.

Issues Unique to this Study

During the course of this study an unexpected issue occurred. This issue is explained and how the researcher responded to it. Also discussed is the extent to which it was anticipated that the dilemma may have influenced the results of the study.

At the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, Royal School District received notification that the district would be monitored by the Mississippi Program Improvement Monitoring system through the Mississippi Department of Education. School districts in Mississippi are monitored on a rotational basis every three years, unless a complaint has been registered with the Mississippi Department of Education Office of Special Education. The monitoring visit seeks to address the need for focusing on areas of compliance that impact on results for children. This monitoring visit focused on student least restrictive environment and the disproportionality ratios of students as addressed in the Mattie T Consent Decree (MDE online). The monitoring visit included a review of district data, and auditors conducted face-to-face interviews with randomly

selected special education teachers, general education teachers, and principals. To prepare principals and teachers for the audit, the Special Education Department of Johnson Public School District coordinated professional development training. The principal at each school participated in the professional development, and then conducted professional development for all certified teachers at their schools. The researcher participated in the same professional development training at her school of employment.

The monitoring visit is mentioned in this section because the researcher realized that information discussed during the interviews was similar information that was discussed during the professional development trainings. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to pay close attention during observations to determine if inclusion practices and collaboration techniques were visible and matched the information given during the interviews.

Study Results

In this section, the interviews with the special education teachers, general education teachers, and the school principal will be discussed. Additionally, the observations conducted in the classroom, the team meeting, and the IEP meeting are also discussed. This summary will provide insight into the personality of the teachers and the principal. The summary will also provide a rich description of King Elementary School.

A table was developed listing the six defining characteristics of collaboration based on the two research questions (see Table 4.1). The characteristics, listed across the top of the chart, received a “Y” for yes, or “N” for no in the columns labeled “int” for interview, or “obs” for observed. During data collection, I determined that the teachers

Table 4.1

Interviews and Observations

	<i>Voluntary</i>		<i>Parity</i>		<i>Mutual Goals</i>		<i>Shared Decision Making</i>		<i>Share Resources</i>		<i>Shared Accountability For Outcomes</i>	
	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Obs</i>
Research Question 1												
Jonas	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Denver	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Harris	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Tinsel	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Research Question 2												
Agnew	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Baker	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Carly	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Davidson	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	75%	75%	100%

were stating that many of the characteristics were a viable part of their collaboration. Nonetheless, research indicates otherwise. Therefore, during the observations I searched for verification of the characteristics. The table below indicates the information that the teachers stated during the interviews regarding the research questions. Additionally, I indicated if I observed the characteristics of collaboration during my observations at King Elementary School.

Interviews with Special Education Teachers

M.s Jonas: Ms Jonas has worked as an elementary special education teacher for nineteen years. She has been a teacher at King Elementary School for 9 years. Her classroom is a District-Wide class. In Royal School District, various schools have been assigned District-Wide classes. The District-Wide class placement is determined by the IEP committee. The determination is based on the needs of the student. If a student requires specific programming that is not available at the student's home school then a District-Wide class is considered. The District-Wide classes are strategically placed so that the child will not be transported for too great of a distance, if possible.

Ms. Jonas teaches students whose chronological ages range from 6 to 9 years old. She considers her class to be multi-disabled. She stated, "They call it a TMR class; I call it multi-handicapped because I have babies that are TMR, EMR, DD, PH, and VI." She has 9 students on her roster. On a daily basis, five students are in the special education classroom for all academic subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) but participate with the general education classes in music, library, computer, counseling, and lunch. Their LRE is self-contained because they are not in a

general education class for more than 20% of the school day. Ms. Jonas has an assistant assigned to her. The assistant continues the instruction with the 5 self-contained students while Ms. Jonas goes into the general education classroom for inclusion. The general education teacher for this class is Ms. Baker. Ms. Jonas has 4 students who are included in a regular second grade classroom for part of the day. She stated, “They go into the regular second grade class for thirty-minutes of Language Arts.” Therefore, Ms. Jonas spends thirty minutes in the general education classroom with the four students in an inclusive classroom. Then, the remainder of her day she returns to her classroom with all 9 students. Ms. Jonas stated, “Four of my students are not able to keep up with the regular second grade students, but each one is assigned a buddy during Language Arts. The buddy helps the student with classroom activities.”

Ms. Jonas discussed one student in her classroom, Jack, (pseudonym). Jack has Down’s syndrome. Therefore, his cognitive abilities and expressive language skills are well below his chronological age. However, his parents want him in a general education classroom as much as possible. Ms. Jonas and Ms. Baker work closely with Jack’s mother. Jack goes into the general education classroom for 30 minutes everyday for Language Arts, and attends music, library, computer, counseling, and lunch with the general education students. Ms. Jonas states that Jack becomes frustrated because he can’t keep up academically with the general education students. “When he becomes frustrated, he throws objects, runs around the room yelling zoom, zoom, or jerk papers off of the other students’ desks and tears them into shreds.” Therefore, Ms. Jonas or the second grade assistant must sit near Jack the entire 30 minutes to keep him focused and

calm. She added, “Jack has made some progress. He is reading a few words and can answer comprehension questions about a story that was read to him. This is progress for Jack. When he was younger, he would not sit and listen to a story that was read orally. Now he will listen.”

Ms. Jonas stated she collaborates with Ms. Baker on a daily basis and that they have a very good working relationship. When asked for details regarding collaboration, Ms. Jonas stated that there is not a scheduled time for collaboration, but she and Ms. Baker “talk daily and discuss ideas that may help.” She stated that Ms. Baker wants the special education children in her room and is willing to “try anything” to ensure that she is successful. She further stated, “Ms. Baker does not put the students in the back of the classroom, or off by themselves in a corner of the room.” She stated further “If Jack’s behavior gets out of control in the general education classroom, Ms. Baker, or her assistant, will bring Jack back to the special education classroom. Sometimes, I spend a lot of time calming him down.”

Ms. Jonas identified benefits to inclusion for both special education and general education students, including:

Special education students learn more than just academics by being with the general population. They begin to have a sense of normalcy as they interact socially. It gives them tools to function in society and the world without having to be removed and isolated. It helps the general education students by teaching them patience and acceptance of others who are not as blessed. It also teaches them to

become a role model and a leader. We see good things happening with all of our students here.

Ms. Jonas identified some disadvantages to inclusion for both special education and general education students. The concerns that she discussed were related to academics. For special education students, she stated that the general education teacher “moves too fast because she cannot take the time to slow the curriculum down.” She further stated that for general education students, the curriculum may be “watered down for special education students which is a huge disadvantage for them.” Inclusion students require increased attention from the classroom teacher, academically and/or behaviorally, which takes time away from everyone.

When asked to discuss barriers to collaboration, Ms. Jonas stated, “Time is the biggest factor.” She further stated that during the school day, the schedule does not include planning time that is common to all teachers. Therefore, grade-level meetings, staff meetings, and IEP meetings take place in the afternoon. She emphasized, “You know how teachers are after school. They are anxious to finish the meeting and go home. It doesn’t matter if you have reached a decision, just hurry and finish.”

Ms. Denver. Ms Denver is a special education teacher who has taught for thirty-one years in the Royal School District. She has taught at King Elementary School for 15 years. Ms. Denver teaches disabled children whose chronological ages range from 9 to 12 years old. These students are in grades 3 through 5. Ms. Denver stated that she has “14 students on her roster and they are EMR, SLD, or Autistic.” She stated that six students meet the requirements for SCD on their IEP and will be alternately assessed during

statewide testing. Ms. Denver has an assistant assigned to instruct her students. The assistant will instruct the students while Ms. Denver goes into the general education class to work with the general education teacher. There are three students that are included in Ms. Davidson's fifth grade classroom for mathematics for 60 minutes each day. Ms. Denver stated that her students "are able to complete the mathematical computation on grade level, but they are not able to read the questions that are in word form." She added that while she is in the general education classroom, she works with the special education students and assists with the general education students that need help.

Ms. Denver stated that she collaborates with Ms. Davidson on a daily basis. She said that they discuss the academic progress of the students. I asked Ms. Denver if she and the general education teacher share the teaching responsibility during the mathematics class. She stated, "No she teaches and I help the students." I further asked how she would describe the collaboration between herself and Ms. Davidson. "Oh, it's great", she stated, "We talk all the time." I inquired further about their discussions, such as when the discussions take place. She said, "Well, you know, we see each other in the hallway, or briefly after school or before school." As I further prodded into the topic Ms. Denver informed me that there is not an established time for teachers to meet. She revealed that after the students go home, she makes calls to parents, prepares for the next day, and grades papers. When asked about barriers to collaboration, she stated that time would be the only factor. She emphasized that all of the teachers at King Elementary School have a great working relationship and each one would do anything for the other.

She feels that resources are shared and every teacher is mutually respected. She stated that as a special education teacher, she has never felt isolated from the other teachers.

Ms. Denver maintained that she would like for the special education students to remain with her for most of the day. In revealing her personal beliefs, she stated.

I feel that the disadvantage, due to the many years that I've been teaching, is that many students have come to me as non-readers. They didn't even know their alphabet. These same students are now in higher grades and they are reading and mastering objectives. Whereas, when you put a child in inclusion all day, and he's a non-reader, doesn't know the alphabet....and you can only pull him out to work with him for thirty minutes or an hour, you're not able to teach that child the skills and basics. He won't learn to read. He doesn't want to hear someone talk all day. Then he becomes a behavior problem and they want you to do something about it. My main objective is to teach the child to read. To do so, I need him with me all day. Then I can put him in the regular classroom.

Ms. Denver discussed social benefits of inclusion for special education students and general education students. She stated that her students like to be with the general education students. She added, "Everything the regular students do in their classroom, my students want to do it too." This peer motivation, she described, "Encourages the special education students to try harder academically and to behave better in the classroom and in the school building." Additionally, she emphasized that the general education students get involved with helping the special education students. The general education students

“Are always checking on the special students to be sure they are getting their work done. It will make better people out of them.”

Ms. Tinsel: Ms. Tinsel has worked as a special education teacher for twenty years. She has been a teacher at King Elementary School for five years. She has twenty children on her roster that are either SLD or OHI. Ms. Tinsel’s students are assigned to Ms. Carly’s or Ms. Davidson’s general education classroom for the majority of the school day. The general education provides instruction for reading, language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, utilizing curriculum and/or behavioral accommodations and modifications that have been determined by the IEP committee. At times, Ms. Tinsel will bring them into her special education classroom to provide intensive academic remediation with particular skills or objectives. Ms. Tinsel divides her time between the two classrooms and allows time for academic remediation. Therefore, her time is spread very thin on a daily basis. Ms Tinsel added that all of her students will take the MCT-2 on grade level, utilizing the determined, allowable accommodations and modifications.

Ms. Tinsel stated that inclusion at King Elementary School is successful due to the support of the school administrator, Ms. Regal. She expressed that Ms. Regal, “Does whatever needs to be done for our children. I think a lot of what they get comes from her. She lets the teachers know that what we are going to do is what is best for the children.”

Ms. Tinsel described collaboration with the two general education teachers as “productive.” She clarified by saying that she and the general education teachers “discuss the students and methods to improve either instruction or behavior management.” Throughout the day, the teachers voluntarily collaborate on teaching strategies and ideas.

However, she mentioned that a barrier to collaboration was time. She stated, “There is not enough time during the day to thoroughly discuss the needs of the students. But, we do have brief conversations throughout the day that ensure that the students are successful.”

Ms. Tinsel added that she is not able to attend all of the grade level meetings due to the responsibility of developing and maintaining IEPs. Each student’s “IEP requires a lot of time to ensure that it is meeting the student’s needs and progress must be indicated every nine weeks. I spend most of my after school time working on the IEP.”

Ms. Harris: Ms. Harris has worked as a special education teacher for ten years. Prior to becoming a certified special education teacher, she was a teacher’s assistant for nine years. Ms. Harris has been teaching at King Elementary School all ten years of her career. She teaches students who are developmentally delayed (DD). Ms. Harris stated,

They may have the disability of DD while they are young. But they will be retested when they get a little older and the disability category will change to SLD, EMR, or whatever. So I usually have multiple disabilities in my classroom. It is my job to get them ready for kindergarten or first grade. It is very difficult because some of them come to me with limited self-help skills, such as feeding themselves or potty training, and very little academic skills.

The Developmentally Delayed class at King Elementary is a District-Wide class for the northern section of Royal School District. Ms. Harris has five students on her class roster. One of her students is currently included in a general education first grade class, Ms.

Agnew's class, for reading and mathematics. The other students participate with the general education students for music, library, counseling, and lunch.

Ms. Harris stated that Keisha (pseudonym) will go into the general education classroom for 90 minutes each day. She receives instruction from the general education teacher for part of her reading lesson and mathematics. Ms. Harris or her assistant frequently go into the general education classroom with Keisha to assist her with the classwork and activities (not the entire 90 minutes). Ms. Harris added,

Keisha is not able to keep up with the other children, so she will start to play with the papers, pencils, or crayons. Then when the class is assigned an activity that requires cutting or gluing, Keisha is not able to follow directions. She will spread the glue everywhere. Someone has to put the glue on the paper for her, and then indicated what picture or letter needs to be glued where. She just can't really be left on her own.

Consequently, Keisha brings disruption to the classroom. The other children "notice her and will get off task too." She emphasized that Ms. Agnew, or her teacher's assistant, must assist Keisha at all times.

When asked about advantages to inclusion, Ms. Harris frowned, and stated, "For the children that are DD, it is difficult to think of an advantage. I guess the advantage is that they are around other kids their age." Ms. Harris quickly mentioned her perception of the disadvantages by stating, "I just think that if they are with me all day, I can work with them all day without interruptions."

I asked Ms. Harris if she collaborates with the general education teacher regarding Keisha. She simply stated, “Yes, we collaborate on a daily basis.” When asked to describe the collaboration, she explained, “We see each other during lunch or after school and I ask how Keisha did that day. Then we talk about her, and ways that we can work together to help her.” Ms. Harris added that the general education will ask her for suggestions or strategies that might assist with Keisha’s academic progress. She further indicated that all of the teachers at King Elementary have a “wonderful, professional relationship.” The problem with “good inclusion and collaboration is finding time during the day to have quality conversation. District administrators ask for a lot of paperwork. They forget that we have to teach the children,” Ms. Harris concluded.

Interviews with General Education Teachers

Ms. Agnew. Ms. Agnew has been a first grade teacher at King Elementary for six years. She has been teaching for 21 years and has experience teaching fifth grade and middle school in Mississippi and another state. Ms. Agnew described teaching first grade as “challenging.” She clarified by stating that discipline is a real problem in the classroom today. “I think that discipline is the number one challenge. Even the little ones don’t come to first grade disciplined and ready to learn.”

There are 27 students in Ms. Agnew’s first grade classroom. She does have an assistant teacher to assist her with the students. She stated that one student, Keisha, will come into her classroom each day for reading and mathematics. Additionally, the other students that are in Ms. Harris’s special education class will attend music, library, counseling, and lunch with her class.

Ms. Agnew conveyed, “I enjoy having Keisha in my room, but it is difficult to give her the time and special instruction that she constantly needs.” She added, “I feel like I take time away from the other students when I stop to help Keisha.” She continually stated that she enjoyed having Keisha in the classroom, but that she did not have the time to help her. She further stated she has “Assigned a peer to help Keisha, but she thinks the peer is there to play with her. Then the peer will do the work for her so that it can be finished.” Ms. Agnew stated that she is concerned about Keisha’s parents thinking that Keisha is doing the work that is sent home. She stated that she documents on the work “peer assisted. I just don’t want the parent to be misinformed by thinking that Keisha is making progress that she is not making.”

When asked about collaboration with the special education teacher, Ms. Agnew stated that they collaborate when they can. She added, “We collaborate briefly during class, lunch, before or after school.” Ms. Agnew suggested that there was no set time provided for collaborating and that it usually happens “catch me when you can...no time for in depth collaboration.”

Ms. Baker. Ms. Baker has been teaching for 32 years. She has taught second grade at King Elementary School for three years and has spent the majority of her teaching career teaching second or third grade. Ms. Baker explained that she enjoys teaching but, “Children are more stimulated now by outside things. So we [teachers] have to hop around more to keep them interested.” According to Ms. Baker, the frustration of teaching “Is the amount of paperwork and documentation decreases the amount of time that we [teachers] actually have with the children.”

At the time of the interview, Ms. Baker has 25 children in her classroom. There is one additional child that comes to her from the special education class. The child, Jack, is scheduled to be in Ms. Jonas' classroom most of the day. Jack is in Ms. Baker's classroom for Language Arts, 30 minutes each day. All of the second grade special education students attend music, library, counseling, and lunch with Ms. Baker's students.

When asked about collaboration, Ms. Baker declared that she and Ms. Jonas collaborated on a daily basis. As questions were asked to prod deeper into the actual collaboration, it was determined that the collaboration between Ms. Baker and Ms. Jonas consisted of "talking about Jack and his behavior." She added, "Ms. Baker, or her assistant, will come into the classroom every day. However, they are not able to stay the entire time." She voiced concerns regarding Jack's behavior and lack of academic progress. I asked her if Ms. Jonas or her assistant worked with the other children in the classroom. She stated, "Ms. Jonas or her assistant will work with any child that needs help as long as Jack is not demanding all of her attention."

Ms Carly: Ms. Carly is in her third year of teaching. All of her teaching experience has been with third grade students. However, this is her first year at King Elementary School. She is young and came into the interview very quietly and reserved. I spent several minutes creating friendly conversation to earn Ms. Carly's trust. As she warmed toward me and began to open up her body language, I was able to begin the interview. Ms. Carly stated that she likes teaching, but described it as "very demanding." She clarified by stating "they expect a lot out of you." I probed deeper into her answer by

asking, “Who expects a lot out of you?” Her reply was, “The State Department and the district you work for. There’s a lot of paperwork involved. You have to be real organized to get everything done in one day. And, there’s a lot of different levels of children in your room. It’s very demanding.”

Ms Carly has 22 students in her classroom. One of those students is a special education student. She stated that the special education teacher comes into the classroom to work with that particular student and helps other students too.

When asked about collaboration, Ms. Carly stated that she and the special education teacher “get along and talk to each other every day.” She further stated, “We talk about her [the special education student] weekly progress, what she struggles with, and what she needs help with.” Ms. Carly informed me that she develops the weekly lesson plans with her grade-level team and the special education teacher develops the IEP. She added, “I go to the IEP meetings and give her information that she asks for.”

Ms Davidson: Ms. Davidson, a fifth grade teacher at King Elementary School, has been teaching for 30 years. She has been teaching fifth grade for 20 years. She has 27 students in her classroom. Two of her students are special education. Ms. Davidson came into the interview with a big smile and greeted me very warmly. When I explained my background and the study, she was very interested and wished me well with my completion. During the interview, she was very friendly and laughed often. She appeared to have a warm disposition that would encourage students to work hard and please their teacher.

Ms. Davidson stated that being an elementary teacher today is “about four times as difficult as was 30 years ago.” She clarified the comment by adding, “the accountability and the testing today puts so much pressure on a teacher. You constantly feel like you are under the gun. The teachers are all stressed and the students are also stressed. It is all very difficult.” She immediately switched her tone with, “But, I love it! There isn’t anything else that I want to do.”

Ms. Davidson stated that the two special education students on her roster are included in her classroom for the majority of the day, and the special education teacher or the special education assistant will come into the classroom on a daily basis to help the students.

“Excellent” is the way that Ms. Davidson described her relationship with the special education teachers.

When the students are having difficulty learning a new concept, they [the special education teachers] work with that student until they learn it. If the students fail the test, the special education teacher will take them out of the room, for maybe 30 minutes, and work with them one-on-one, or in a small group. They continue to work on that skill until the child learns it. The special education teachers also help the students with their test. The student will take the test with the general population. Then, if they fail it, the special education teacher will reteach the skill and retest them. This helps me a lot for them to do that.

When asked about collaboration, Ms. Davidson stated that they collaborate. She stated that they have weekly team meetings to discuss lesson plans. She informed me that

the lesson plans are developed by the grade level team. Then copies of the weekly lesson plans are given to the special education teacher and the principal. When I inquired about the IEP development and collaboration between the teachers, Ms. Davidson stated, “I’m involved with meeting and I have some input. But, the special education teacher is basically responsible for that.”

Interview with the Principal

Ms. Regal: Ms. Regal has been the principal at King Elementary School for three years. Prior to becoming principal, she has eight years of experience as a classroom teacher. When the interview began, Ms. Regal was very warm and smiled or laughed frequently. However, she had a professional serious demeanor that justifies her authority.

Ms. Regal described her job as “challenging and exciting.” She stated, “I think special people have to do this just like special people have to teach in the classroom, and special people work with the special education population.” She added, “Being an administrator is a way that I thought I could give back, more school wide, than in the classroom. I wanted the opportunity to make a difference, more of an impact.”

I asked Ms. Regal to describe how she established a vision for the successful inclusion of special education students and encourage successful collaboration. She replied,

we [the faculty of King Elementary School] just have the mind that all children are different, all children can learn, and they all the ability to do something.

Wherever a child is when you get them, you need to move them forward no matter what. There is something teachers can do to help them perform. So we

have the mindset that all children are different and we have to provide opportunities for all children. To encourage collaboration, I use shared decision making. I tell them, we have a particular task to do. How do you think we can get this done? The floor is open for communication and I ask for everyone to agree before we close the meeting.

Ms. Regal stated that she knows her teachers collaborate effectively because they are allowed to have discussion amongst themselves. She added, “They know each other’s children. They are not an island. I see the conversations that they have and the things they bring to me. I see their data. I know they are effective. They share knowledge with each other.”

Observations

Three separate observations were conducted during data collection. The observations included a classroom, grade-level team meeting, and an IEP meeting. Each observation lasted 60 minutes or longer. The observation data were obtained through the observer role. In the observer role, I observed and had little or no interaction with the teacher or students (Glesne, 1999). I sat in an inconspicuous location in the classroom where I observed and heard the interaction between the teacher and students, teachers, and teachers and parents. During the observations, extensive notes that captured key phrases and events were documented, and the classroom or situation was described in detail (including the arrangement of the room or other subtleties that may assist with data analysis). As soon as possible after completing the observation, a detailed descriptive account of the observations was typed into a transcription format. In addition to the

descriptive account of the observation, reflective notes which were designated as observer's comments (OC) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Observer's comments presented my feelings, reactions, questions, and hunches about the observation (Merriam, 1998). I also remained conscious of and noted any subjective feelings during observations by writing SF for subjectivity file in my field notes (Glesne, 1999).

The observation data yielded 22 pages of observation and field notes. The data could easily be connected back to the original document through codes that were assigned to the original observation documents. The original documents were stored in a locked file cabinet in the home of the researcher. This method would allow me to refer back to the original documents if needed.

This section will provide an explanation of each observation. It is necessary to provide an explanation of the observation so that a picture can be painted of the interaction and collaboration between the special education teachers and the general education teachers at King Elementary School.

Classroom Observation

The classroom observation was conducted in Ms. Carly's classroom. Ms. Tinsel was in the classroom to instruct the special education student. The classroom had twenty one students during the observation. Of that number, there were ten female students, and eleven male students. Both teachers were dressed professionally, but comfortable.

I met the students as they were returning to the classroom after lunch. The students were well-behaved, and curious about my presence. As I walked beside the students, one student asked if I was going to their classroom. When I answered that I was,

he smiled and questioned, “Why?” I answered, “I heard that your class the smartest in the school, so I wanted to come see how smart you are.” That answer appeared to satisfy his curiosity. He continued to walk with his classmates, with a huge smile on his face.

Immediately upon entering the classroom, Ms. Carly did not turn the lights on, but instructed the students to go to their desk and put their heads down to “rest their lunch.” The students willingly complied with her directive. During this time, she quickly prepared for the introduction of the lesson.

Within a few minutes, Ms. Carly turned on the lights and stated, “Head’s up, eyes on me.” The students raised their heads and quietly watched their teacher. Ms. Carly then began to teach the lesson. While Ms. Carly was teaching, Ms. Tinsel walked around the room, moving from one student to another. As the lesson continued, the students were given an independent assignment to complete based on the lesson that had been taught. While the students completed the assignment, Ms. Carly and Ms. Tinsel walked around from student to student.

Grade-Level Team Meeting Observation

The team meeting observation was arranged to prior to the observation. It was scheduled because each grade-level team meets on a different day of the week. The grade level that was observed was the fifth grade team. The general education teacher, Ms. Davidson who is the grade-level chairperson, two other fifth grade teachers, and a special education teacher, Ms Denver attended the grade-level team meeting. The meeting was held immediately after the students left for the day. I was in the room waiting when the teacher arrived. The teachers appeared happy, and very friendly with each other. The first

comments that were spoken regarded events that had occurred during the day by their students. This created a great deal of laughter.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Davidson. She asked each teacher for their lesson plans for the upcoming week. The teachers divide the work for writing lesson plans for the grade-level. For example, Ms. Davidson writes the lesson plans for Reading and Language Arts, one teacher writes the plans for Mathematics, and the other teacher writes the plans for science and social studies. Ms. Denver was given a copy of each lesson plan. The teachers were then asked to orally review the plans that had been written and briefly describe the activities that would accompany the skills.

Unfortunately, the teachers did not ask Ms. Denver for input regarding the special education students that were in inclusion. The accommodations and modification that are in the IEPs were not discussed. Ms. Denver sat quietly and listened to the discussion of the lesson plans.

The final part of the grade-level team meeting discussed plans to prepare the fifth grade students for intensive academic focus on the objectives for the MCT-2. The fifth grade team decided to group the lower-performing students in each class, and prepare activities for them to reinforce the skills that would be tested. Again, the academic needs of the special education students were not addressed.

IEP Meeting Observation

The IEP meeting was for a student in Ms. Jonas' special education classroom and Ms. Baker's second grade classroom. The IEP committee consisted of Ms. Jonas, the special education teacher, Ms. Baker, the general education teacher, the speech/language

pathologist, the principal, and the student's mother and grandmother. The student, Jack (pseudonym) functions well below grade level due to his cognitive ability, but his parents insist that he must be included in the general education classroom for a small percentage of the day. The mother stated, "I want Jack to be with the kids his own age. I know that he can learn from them. He needs to be around other children." The IEP committee determined that Jack would be included in the general education classroom for Language Arts, as well as music, library, counseling, and lunch. During the day, Jack would be assigned a peer buddy to assist him with activities and assignments.

Ms. Jonas conducted the majority of the IEP meeting and the speech/language pathologist discussed language goals for Jack. Ms. Baker, sat quietly and did not contribute to the content meeting. She signed the IEP without questions or hesitancy. When the meeting concluded, Ms. Baker told the mother a few stories about how Jack has acclimated to her and the students in the classroom. She stressed, "I enjoy the time that Jack is in my room."

Data Presentation for Research Questions

Data will be presented examining how teachers collaborate to ensure academic success for special education students in an inclusive classroom. The data analysis is derived from the interviews with four special education teachers, four general education teachers, and the principal. Additional data was analyzed from one classroom observation, one grade-level team meeting, and one IEP meeting.

Research Question 1 is: How do special education teacher collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with general education teachers?

Research Question 2 is: How do general education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with special education teachers?

The data will be analyzed for each research question divided into the six dispositions that define the characteristics of collaboration as defined by Friend and Cook (1996). The six dispositions are: (a) collaboration is voluntary; (b) collaboration requires parity among participants; (c) collaboration is based on mutual goals; (d) collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making; (e) individuals who collaborate share their resources; (f) individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes.

Voluntary

People can not be forced to interact with their colleagues. They must choose to collaborate. Friend and Cook (1996) emphasized that “education agencies can mandate administrative arrangements that require staff to work in close proximity, but only the individuals involved can decide if a collaborative style will be used in their interaction” (p. 7). For this study, teachers were asked if they voluntarily collaborate.

Special Education Teachers

During the interviews, all of the special education teachers, Jonas, Denver, Harris, and Tinsel indicated that they voluntarily participated in collaboration. Ms. Jonas stated, “Yes, it is voluntary. As we need to talk, we do. I would say we talk every day, but not at a scheduled time.” Ms. Denver declares “We all volunteer to collaborate. It is not scheduled. We just collaborate when we need to, or when we can.” The school principal,

Ms. Regal explained, “I know they [the teachers] have lots of discussions amongst themselves. I know they know each other’s children in their class. They work closely together.”

General Education Teachers

The interviews with the general education teachers, Agnew, Baker, Carly, and Davidson, indicated that collaboration with the special education teachers is voluntary. Ms. Davidson stated, “Ms. Regal wants us to do it [collaborate]. But we already know that. We’ve always worked together here.” Ms. Baker added, “We all get along great here. We put the children first, so volunteering to collaborate is a given. We don’t time scheduled during the school day, but when we need to talk to each other, we do. It’s not a problem.” Ms. Carly contributed, “Yes, the teachers here don’t need administrative requirements to come together to discuss the children.”

Observations

The observations indicated that the teachers voluntarily come together during grade level planning. The grade-level meeting was scheduled at 2:30 p.m. on a Thursday afternoon. I was in the classroom waiting for the team members to arrive. All of the teachers arrived on time, and had happy smiles on their faces as they entered the room. The meeting consisted of three general education teachers and one special education teacher. The teachers greeted each other warmly and were smiling. From this meeting, and other times that I was in the school, I determined that the teaching staff was open and friendly with each other. During the grade-level meeting, the teachers discussed the

lesson plans for the next week. The special education teacher was included in the meeting, but did not discuss the needs of the special education students. I concluded that her role was more of an observer. The grade-level chairperson reviewed the lesson plans for the following week. The two other general education teachers discussed the lessons and identified barriers that may occur during the lesson. However, the academic needs of the special education children were not discussed. The researcher deduced that the teachers at King Elementary School, as with other familiar schools, have established roles. The general education teachers plan the curriculum for the entire grade level. Curriculum modifications are not established on a weekly basis for the special education students. Collaboration between the special education teacher and the general education teachers did not take place during this meeting.

The teachers overwhelmingly stated during their interviews that collaboration is voluntary. Observations that were conducted led the researcher to conclude that attending scheduled meetings was voluntary by the special education teachers and the general education teachers. However, collaboration as it is defined by Friend and Cook (1996) was not observed.

Parity

According to Friend and Cook (1996), "Parity is a situation when each person's contribution to an interaction is equally valued, and each person has equal power in decision-making" (p. 7). For parity to be part of collaboration, "One or several individuals should not be perceived by others as having greater decision-making power or more valuable knowledge or information" (p. 7). For the purposes of this study, parity is

when the special education and general education teachers have equal status in participation and power in decision-making when they collaborate.

Special Education Teachers

The special education teachers stated that they have equal power in decision-making when they collaborate regarding the special education students. Ms. Tinsel declared, “Oh yes, we have equal power, absolutely. We work close together, as a team.” Ms. Jonas added, “I consider myself equal. We are always having conversations.” Ms. Denver simply stated that she felt equal. However, she quickly added, “but I have to make sure that my students get what they need.” Ms. Harris agreed, “I feel equal. But my children are younger than the other students. So I know what they need.”

General Education Teachers

The general education teachers agreed that all teachers in King Elementary School have equal power. Ms. Davidson stated “When Ms. Denver comes into my room; I know that she is there to help. I don’t mind allowing her to work with her students and any of the other students in my classroom. At times, she gives me suggestions for my lower-performing students.” Ms. Agnew conveyed that she needs the special education teacher to help her. “I give Ms. Jonas equal regard as a certified teacher. The special education students in my classroom need her help. It makes a huge difference when she comes in the classroom. After class, we try to talk about the students and what will help him to be successful.” This is the first statement regarding reflection.

Observations

The observations indicated strong personal relationships between the teachers. During the IEP meeting, the special education teacher took the lead role, during the grade-level meeting, the chair-person took the lead role, and during the classroom observation, the general education teacher took the lead role. The teachers had apparent working relationships, but in every situation one person took on a lead role.

The teachers indicated during the interviews that they each had equal power in decision making. However, the observations did not bring forth evidence to substantiate their claim. Therefore, the researcher deducted that parity, as described by Friend and Cook (1996) was not part of the collaborative process at King Elementary School.

Mutual Goals

Mutual goals are defined by Friend and Cook (1996) as individuals having a shared commitment to an end they are striving to attain. For collaboration to occur, the goal should be “significant enough for both parties to commit their time and energy” (p. 8). In this study, the special education teachers and the general education teachers were asked if they agreed-upon the same goals for the academic success of special education students in inclusive classrooms.

Special Education Teachers

The special education teachers agreed that mutual goals were part of the collaboration they had with the general education teachers. They unanimously agreed that

they developed the goals on the IEP and the general education teachers determined academic goals in the classroom.

Ms. Tinsel explained that when she develops the accommodations and modifications for an IEP, she asks the general education teacher to review the document prior to the meeting. She further expressed, “In the general education classroom, that teacher writes the lesson plan. She gives me a copy every week, but doesn’t ask for my ideas or suggestions.”

Ms. Jonas contends that the general education teachers have the “best interest of her class in mind when she plans lessons for her class and decides on the activities.” She further stated, “Sometimes I have to just jump in and make changes when I see that my students are not able to keep up. I will reduce the assignment or make adjustments that are needed so that my students can complete the assignment at their level.” Ms. Jonas justified the relationship between the general education and herself by stating, “She [the general education teacher] has too much to do on a weekly basis. She doesn’t really have time to modify the assignments. So when I can, I just do it. It works for us.”

General Education Teachers

The general education teachers agreed that mutual goals were an important segment of the academic success for the students at King Elementary School. However, during their interview sessions, it was revealed that each group established goals for their students.

Ms. Carly conveyed that she sets the academic goals for the general education classroom. She added,

I have to make sure that my lesson plans follow the blue prints established by the Royal School District. If you're talking about goals for the IEP they are usually done by the special education teacher. I attend the IEP meeting, because a general education teacher is needed, but I don't set those goals. The special ed teachers give us [general education teachers] copies of the IEP and make suggestions for modifications. They [special education teachers] are always available to help. I do think we have the same goals. The goal is always to make sure the students are successful.

Ms. Baker offered similar information. She stated we have team meetings every week to discuss lesson plans for the grade level. The special ed teachers are not always there for one reason or another. Our weekly meetings are the same every week. We bring our lesson plans together for the next week and we discuss them. We discuss the activities that will be used to enforce the skill, and determine what materials we will need. If the special ed teacher is there, she usually doesn't say anything.

Observations

The team meeting provided verification of the statements that Ms. Carly and Ms. Baker provided. The team meeting progressed professionally. I knew that the general education teachers and the special education teacher shared the goal of overall academic success for the students in the entire grade level. However, I did not witness mutual goals discussed for the special education students. Neither, the IEP, nor the accommodations

and modifications were discussed for the student to master the skills that would be taught during the following week.

Using the definition by Friend and Cook (1996) describing collaboration based on mutual goals, I was not able to determine that goals were established by the general education teachers and the special education teachers to ensure that the special education students would be successful.

Participation and Decision Making

Shared responsibility for participation and decision making involves individuals participating equally in the decision-making involved with instructional tasks. For the purposes of this study, general education and special education teachers must be equal partners and collaboratively engage in deliberations as they make joint decisions.

According to Friend and Cook (1996) people can actively participate in accomplishing a task even if the division of labor may not be equal. A second component explains that people may have different responsibilities, but both must “equally participate in deciding the appropriateness and possible modifications needed” (p. 9).

Special Education Teachers

All of the special education teachers disagreed with the responsibility for participation and decision-making. The interviews with the special education teachers resulted in an overwhelming consensus that they were responsible for obtaining participation of all parties and usually made decisions for the special education students.

General Education Teachers

The interviews with the general education teachers regarding participation and decision-making yielded mixed results. Ms. Davidson ascertained that she shared the responsibility for participation and decision-making. However, the other three general education teachers stated that the special education teachers had a larger role in the decision making for the special education students.

Ms. Davidson explained how the teachers in her team meet on a weekly basis. She added, “Ms. Denver comes to as many of the meetings as she can. She is there more often than not.” Additionally, Ms. Davidson expressed that during each meeting lesson plans are shared and discussed. “If Ms. Denver sees a problem, she alerts us so that we can discuss it ahead of time. She is great at perceiving a situation that may occur with her students.”

During the interview with Ms. Davidson, I probed deeper into the question to seek her input regarding decision-making. She stated,

the grade-level team writes the lesson plans. Ms. Denver is given a copy every week and can make comments or suggestions. The team always listens to her ideas and tries everything to be sure that the special education students are successful. If Ms. Denver says that we need to tweak something, we will tweak it as long as it doesn’t change the skill too much. I really have to make sure that I don’t water the curriculum down for the regular students. This is a concern.

Ms. Agnew and the other two teachers conveyed that the special education teachers make most of the decisions for the special education students. As Ms. Agnew

stated, “The students [special education] are in our classrooms, but their special education teacher keeps tabs on them to make sure that they are getting their work done. I let her do what she needs to do.”

Observations

The observation of the IEP meeting supported the information that had been stated in the interviews. The special education teacher, Ms. Jonas, conducted the meeting. The general education teacher offered a small amount of information to the parent. It was apparent to me that the special education teacher made the decisions for the instructional goals, accommodations, and modifications that were in the IEP. The general education teacher agreed with the IEP and signed it at the end of the meeting. There were no changes made to the IEP during the meeting.

Collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making as stated by Friend and Cook (1996). The interviews and observations led this researcher to conclude that the teachers at King Elementary School may share responsibility for participation. However, they did not share the responsibility for decision making. The special education teacher, in most cases, maintained the responsibility for making all decisions for the special education students.

Shared Resources

Friend and Cook (1996) defined shared resources as individuals who possess and are willing to share information, equipment, and other assets. Other assets may be knowledge of a special technique, time, availability, etc. This study examined special

education teachers and general education teachers having a responsibility to share resources to achieve goals for student success.

Special Education Teachers

All of the special education teachers stated emphatically that the relationships at King Elementary School resulted in sharing. As Ms. Tinsel stated, “If I have something she [general education teacher] needs, I give it to her. If she has something I need, she gives it to me. I keep a huge library of off grade level resources that are available to all of the teachers. Sometimes, they will come into my room and borrow something. I would have to say that we share everything here.” This statement was the consensus of all of the special education teachers until I delved deeper into the definition. When I mentioned teaching techniques, the response from Ms. Tinsel was, “No, I have never been asked about a teaching technique.” On the contrary, Ms. Jonas conveyed that she has offered teaching techniques “to teachers who ask.” Then when I asked about sharing time, the unanimous response was laughter. As described by Ms. Denver, “We don’t have enough time during the day to eat lunch. How can we find time to share?” She further stated, “We have a great relationship here [at King Elementary School]. We share everything that we can. But time, there is just not enough of it.” Ms. Harris also described the teacher relationships in the school as “We share everything with each other. The special education teachers usually won’t volunteer anything unless they are asked. We just want to keep peace.”

General Education Teachers

The general education teachers expressed different beliefs regarding sharing resources. As described by Ms. Agnew, “All of it- time, materials, professional knowledge. I think that’s what makes us collaborate more, because we do share.” Ms. Baker added,

when we assign a special project to the class, the special education teacher knows that the students will not be able to do the project by themselves. Since most of them don’t have the parental support that they need, the special education teacher will help the students get their projects done. I feel sure that the teacher provides the supplies that are needed for the project. So I would have to say that we share all resources, supplies, time, etc. We share everything.

Ms. Carly addressed the question by stating, “The special education teachers help me when I need help. They know that I don’t have much experience. They are very willing to offer their help when I ask.” When I asked the deeper question regarding teaching techniques and time, she responded quite simply with, “I don’t know, I’ve never asked.”

Observations

During the observation of the classroom, I was eager to see the special education teacher assist, or co-teach, a lesson with the general education teacher. However, the relationship that I observed appeared to be more of a teacher and assistant relationship. The general education teacher delivered a very exciting, and well planned lesson explaining the author’s purpose for writing. During instruction and independent practice,

the special education teacher walked around to all of the students to ensure they were remaining on-task. Therefore, sharing resources and collaboration were not observed during this classroom observation.

The observation of IEP meeting resulted in obvious sharing of resources. During the IEP meeting, the special education teacher offered to provide audio-tapes of the reading stories for the student to listen to on a daily basis. She also stated the amount of time that she, or her assistant, would go into the regular classroom with the student for inclusion. The amount of inclusion time was written into the IEP.

The interviews and observations did not provide data to support sharing resources that contribute to a shared goal. The special education teachers and general education teachers did provide data that materials were willingly shared. However, other resources such as knowledge, teaching techniques, and time were not substantiated by the data.

Shared Accountability for Outcomes

Shared accountability for outcomes is defined by Friend and Cook (1996) as individuals who share responsibility for the results of a mutually agreed upon endeavor. For the purpose of this study, special education and general education teachers who collaborate share joint accountability for success of special education students in inclusive classrooms.

Special Education Teachers

The interviews with the special education teachers resulted in unanimous statements of academic responsibility is assigned to each of them for the students on their class rosters. As Ms. Tinsel emphasized,

I am responsible. The student may be in the regular teacher's classroom. But if that student starts to fail, it my responsibility to find out what is going on and fix it. Each IEP states that the student will master grade level objectives at 70% or greater. If one of my students receives a grade less than 70%, I haven't done my job. That objective was not mastered. I have to modify the assignment or provide the needed accommodations and reteach that objective. Then the student has to be retested to make sure that he masters the objective. There is a lot of pressure on us [special education teachers] to make sure our students are ready for the MCT-2."

Ms. Jonas further stated, "It is always the job of the special education teacher to make sure the students are passing. No Child Left Behind mandates that we include them in the classroom, but unless they put a special education teacher and a regular education teacher in the same classroom, it is impossible for the regular teacher to teach two different lessons."

Ms. Denver's statements voiced the same belief. She stated, "I think it's good for the special education students to be included in many of the regular activities. But I know that I can teach my students to read. The regular education teachers were not able to teach them to read. If they could, the student would be in my classroom. If they leave a student with me, without interruption, I will teach them to read."

Ms. Harris commented that she is responsible for her student's academic success. She stated, "My students are very young. They come to me with very few social skills and even less academic skills. I know that the responsibility is mine. My success with a child may determine if he or she will ever be able to go into a regular classroom".

General Education Teachers

Not surprisingly, three of the general education teachers' statements mirrored the statements of the special education teachers. The general education teachers, with the exception of Ms. Davidson, stated that accountability for the academic success of the special education students was on the shoulders of the special education teachers.

Ms. Davidson contended,

if they are in my class, I am responsible. When the test data comes back to the school, my name is attached. Even though the student is in special education, my name is attached. I work very hard to make sure that all of my students are successful. As for their report cards, we modify the assignments for each child. It concerns me when the grade may be a C or D. I feel like the parent may get false hopes about their child's real academic skills. I try to make sure that I keep telling them [the parents] that the work was modified according to the IEP. But, my name is attached to the report card too."

Ms. Carly stated that she feels that the special education teacher is more accountable for the academic success of the students.

I think that since I don't set the original goals that it's not my responsibility to make sure that the student is successful on every objective. I think if I did

absolutely nothing and let them [special education students] sit there, I would be at fault. But, I think it's more of the special education teacher's job to monitor the academic progress of their students. They have to decide if the student is not doing well, maybe they need an IEP meeting. It's really their job to take care of that.

Observations

Data collected during the observations resulted in a conclusion that agreed with that of the special education teachers. At King Elementary School, accountability for the academic success of the special education students in inclusive classrooms was not jointly shared among the special education teachers and the general education teachers.

During the IEP meeting the special education teacher, Ms. Jonas, continually told the parent that she would ensure that the student would be successful in the inclusive classroom. She stated that she would provide the modifications to the curriculum and accommodate the academic and behavioral needs of the student. While playing the role of the observer in the IEP meeting, it appeared that the general education teacher would play the role of a teacher proxy while he was in her room. The special education teacher would provide everything that the student needed in order for him to spend time "socializing with the general population". The regular education teacher did not appear to assume the role of the student's teacher during the time he would be included in the inclusive classroom.

Emerging Themes

During the analysis of the data, two themes emerged in most of the interviews. The two emerging themes are time and professional development. The special education teachers discussed time as a barrier to effective collaboration. As Ms. Jonas stated, “During the day in an elementary school, teachers have brief periods of time without students. When I have a few minutes free, I usually have to take care of personal needs. We don’t have time scheduled to plan together.” Notably, Ms. Davidson made a similar statement, “We just don’t have enough time during the day to discuss the needs of each child. Then the principal asks many teachers to serve on various committees after school. After all day, everybody just wants to go home. We are all extremely tired!” Similar statements were made by all of the teachers interviewed.

Another theme that emerged during the data analysis was professional development. Two of the general education teachers indicated that Royal School District’s Special Education Office provides professional development regarding some issues. Ms. Carly stated “I’ve attended training here at the school to talk about the IEP and the least restrictive environment. But, I’ve never had training on the right way to collaborate.” Ms Agnew further expressed, “Sure the special education office sends someone into the schools on a regular basis to make sure we know all about special education laws and policies. Then the curriculum office sends someone to help with curriculum. But, I don’t think I’ve ever had training for collaboration.” Conversely, the school principal, Ms. Regal stated that she had attended professional development that included methods of effective collaboration.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss my findings in relation to theory and research. Next, I discuss recommendations for educators. Finally, I make suggestions for future research.

Summary and Discussion of Collaboration

The purpose of this study was to examine how special education and general education teachers collaborate regarding the instructional needs for special education students in inclusive classrooms. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. Research Question 1: How do special education teachers collaborate when working with general education teachers?
2. Research Question 2: How do general education teachers collaborate when working with special education teachers?

The research questions for this study are derived from six defining characteristics of collaboration as described by Friend and Cook (1996). The defining characteristics are: (a) collaboration is voluntary; (b) collaboration requires parity among participants; (c) collaboration is based on mutual goals; (d) collaboration depends on shared responsibility

for participation and decision making; (e) individuals who collaborate share their resources, and (f) individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes.

Research Question One

Research question one addressed how special education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with general education teachers? To answer this question, I interviewed four special education teachers and conducted observations of the teachers in a classroom setting, in a team level meeting, and an IEP meeting. My findings for each of the defining characteristics are:

- a. collaboration is voluntary: All of the special education teachers stated that collaboration is voluntary. During the observations, I was able to confirm that the teachers voluntarily collaborated during the school day and after the school day.
- b. collaboration requires parity among participants: The special education teachers stated unanimously that parity exists between them, and the general education teachers. During the observations, I was not able to confirm parity among the participants. The observations produced evidence of separation of ownership of students and responsibility of student success.
- c. collaboration is based on mutual goals: All of the special education teachers stated that collaboration is based on mutual goals. During the observations, I was able to confirm that the special education teachers and

the general education teachers shared mutual goals during times of collaboration.

- d. collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making: Each of the special education teachers stated that they did not share responsibility for participation and decision making when collaborating. During the observations, I verified that the teachers did not share the responsibility for decision making. The special education teachers and the general education teachers maintained separation of power regarding the special education students.
- e. individuals who collaborate share resources: The special education teachers stated that they share resources with the general education teachers. During the observations, I was not able to confirm a sharing of resources as described by Friend and Cook (1998). The teachers obviously shared materials and handouts. However, I was not able to conclude that resources such as strategies and techniques are shared.
- f. individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes: Each of the special education teachers stated that they do not share accountability for outcomes. The observations verified that each teacher feels totally responsible for the academic and behavioral success of the special education students.

Research Question Two

Research question two addressed how general education teachers collaborate, as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), when working with special education teachers. To answer this question, I interviewed four general education teachers and conducted observations of the teachers in a classroom setting, in a team level meeting, and an IEP meeting. My findings for each of the defining characteristics are:

- a. collaboration is voluntary: Each of the general education teachers stated that they voluntarily collaborate with the special education teachers. During the observations, I was able to conclude that the teachers collaborated voluntarily during the school day and after school.
- b. collaboration requires parity among participants: All of the general education teachers stated that parity exists between them, and the special education teachers. During the observations, I was not able to confirm the existence of parity among the two groups of teachers.
- c. collaboration is based on mutual goals: All of the general education teachers stated that collaboration was based on mutual goals. The observations confirmed that general education teachers and the special education teachers discussed the academic and behavior success of the inclusion students.
- d. collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making: Each of the general education teachers stated that they did not share responsibility for participation and decision making for the

inclusion students. The general education teachers commonly referred to the inclusion students by name of a teacher.

- e. collaboration requires individuals to share resources: The general education teachers unanimously stated that they share resources with the special education teachers. The observations did not confirm resources being shared.
- f. collaboration requires individuals to share accountability for outcomes: Two of the four (50%) of the general education teachers stated that they share accountability for outcomes of the inclusion students. The observations did not confirm shared accountability for outcomes. The role of the general education teacher indicated that the inclusion student was a visitor in the classroom.

Recommendations for Educators

The word inclusion in school settings means to include all students in the general education setting. We should focus on creating a culture to support the belief that all special education teachers and general education teachers are responsible for the education of all students. We further should provide school communities where there is no delineation for teacher differences based on federal and state mandates. The school community should believe and practice that all teachers are responsible for the education of all students.

Time should be allocated to encourage face-to-face conversations between teachers and all staff members. Collaborative discussions will enhance each teacher's role

and responsibility to meet the needs of students. The discussions will lead to implementing shared resources beyond materials and equipment. Teachers will recognize the greatest resource that exists within themselves through their ability to share strength in knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes.

Professional development opportunities should be developed to train teachers and administrators to properly collaborate throughout the day, and at assigned times. Participation in collaboration must be based on choice and interest in small learning communities. Teachers should become true professionals who teach and support each other as they raise student achievement.

Implications for Future Research

This case study was conducted in one elementary in Mississippi. The study provides the opportunity for educators to begin discussions on effective collaboration between special education teachers and general education teacher. However, more research is required to further understand the educational impact of collaboration on the achievement of special education students in inclusive classrooms. The following research recommendations will further the knowledge gained by this study.

1. This study should be replicated to include middle schools to determine if similar results are found.
2. This study should be replicated to include high schools to determine if similar results are found.

3. This study should be replicated to include district level leaders to determine if their perceptions are the same or different than the teachers' perceptions.
4. This study should be replicated to examine how schools of education address the issues of collaboration in their programs, especially whether or not collaborative strategies are modeled in their classes.

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APPENDIX A
IRB PERMISSION



February 4, 2008

Tina Atkins
166 Basswood Circle
Brandon, MS 39047

RE: IRB Study #08-026: A Case Study Examining the Collaboration Between General Education and Special Education Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms

Dear Ms. Atkins:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 2/4/2008 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.103(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

Please refer to your IRB number (#08-026) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Katherine Crowley at kcrowley@research.msstate.edu or 662-325-8543.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Crowley".

Katherine Crowley
Assistant IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Dr. Jerry Mathews

Office for Regulatory Compliance

P.O. Box 6233 • 80 Morgan Street • Neshville 37233 • Mississippi State, MS 39762 • (662) 325-3294 • FAX (662) 325-3776

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms.

If you participate in this research project, you will be interviewed on two separate occasions for approximately 30-45 minutes each time. The interview(s) will be audio-recorded. The questions asked will address general information about your teaching experience and collaboration with your colleagues. You will also be observed by the researcher on various occasions.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, or refuse to answer any specific question that you do not desire to answer. The information you provide will be kept confidential. The final writing of this project will use pseudonyms in reference to teachers, administrators, the school, and the school district. There are no anticipated risks involved with this research project.

If you should have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Dr. Jerry Mathews at (662) 325-7270 or by email at jmathews@colled.msstate.edu. For more information about human participation in research, please feel free to contact the MSU Regulatory Compliance Office at (662) 352-3294.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____ Yes, I will participate in this study

_____ Participant's Signature	_____ Grade	_____ Date
_____ Telephone Number		_____ Best Time to Call
_____ Investigator's Signature		_____ Date

APPENDIX C

PROTOCOL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Name: _____ **School:** _____ **Date:** _____
:

Ethnicity: _____ **Gender:** _____ **Age:** _____
:

Years in Teaching: _____ **Years in particular grade level:** _____

Degree: _____ **Concentration:** _____
Certification: _____.

1. (a) What is it like to be a special education teacher today?

(b) When you selected teaching special education as a career goal, did you intend to become an elementary special education teacher?
2. How many special education students are assigned to you?
3. What are the various disabilities that your students have?
4. What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for your special education students?
5. How many of the special education students on your roster will participate in the state mandated grade level testing (MCT-2)?
6. Describe how you provide inclusive services for your students.
7. How many classrooms do you provide inclusive services on a daily basis?
8. Describe your professional relationship(s) with the general education teacher(s).
 - (a) Do you assist only the special education students?
 - (b) Do you co-teach subjects to all students?

- 9. Do you collaborate in developing lesson plans?**
- 10. How are curriculum objectives modified for the special education student(s)?**
- 11. Does the general education teacher participate in the development of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for the special education students? Describe.**
- 12. Describe the collaboration that takes place between you and the general education teacher?**
 - (a) Is it a voluntary process?**
 - (b) Do you collaborate at a scheduled time, or as needed?**
- 13. When you are collaborating with general education teachers, how do you ensure that each person has equal power in making decisions?**
- 14. During collaboration, how do you determine if the goal that is being discussed is a common goal?**
- 15. When tasks are determined for each teacher, how do you determine if the work load is divided equally?**
- 16. How are resources shared between teachers? (Resources are time, availability, knowledge of a teaching technique or skill.)**
- 17. Do you share the responsibility for the academic success (positive or negative) of the special education students?**
- 18. Discuss any barriers that feel inhibit effective collaboration?**
- 19. Do you think that inclusion is effective at your school?**

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Name: _____ **School:** _____ **Date:** _____
:

Ethnicity: _____ **Gender:** _____ **Age:** _____
:

Years in Teaching: _____ **Years in particular grade level:** _____

Degree: _____ **Concentration:** _____
Certification: _____.

5. (a) What is it like to be an elementary school teacher today?

(b) When you selected teaching as a career goal, did you intend to become an elementary school teacher?
6. How many students are in your classroom?
(a) How many general education students?
(b) How many special education students?
7. What percentage of the school day are the special education students in your classroom?
4. How many of the special education students on your roster will participate in the state mandated grade level testing (MCT-2)?
20. How often does the special education teacher come into your classroom?
21. Describe your professional relationship with the special education teacher.
(a) Does the special education teacher assist only the special education students?

(b) Does the special education teacher co-teach subjects to all students?
22. Does the special education teacher collaborate in developing lesson plans?

- 23. How are curriculum objectives modified for the special education student(s)?**
- 24. Do you participate in the development of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for the special education students? Describe.**
- 25. Describe the collaboration that takes place between you and the special education teacher?**
 - (a) Is it a voluntary process?**
 - (b) Do you collaborate at a scheduled time, or as needed?**
- 26. When you are collaborating with the special education teacher, how do you ensure that each person has equal power in making decisions?**
- 27. During collaboration, how do you determine if the goal that is being discussed is a common goal?**
- 28. When tasks are determined for each teacher, how do you determine if the work load is divided equally?**
- 29. How are resources shared between teachers? (Resources are time, availability, knowledge of a teaching technique or skill.)**
- 30. Do you share the responsibility for the academic success (positive or negative) of the special education students?**
- 31. Discuss any barriers that feel inhibit effective collaboration?**
- 32. Do you think that inclusion is effective at your school?**

APPENDIX E
PROTOCOL FOR ADMINISTRATOR

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____	School: _____	Date: _____
:		
Ethnicity: _____	Gender: _____	Age: _____
:		
Years in Teaching: _____	Years in administration: _____	
Degree: _____	Concentration: _____	
Certification: _____		

8. (a) What is it like to be an elementary school administrator today?

(b) When you selected education as a career goal, did you intend to become an elementary school administrator?
9. How many students are in your school?
(c) How many general education students?
(d) How many special education students?
3. How many of the special education students in your school will participate in the state mandated grade level testing (MCT-2)?
4. As the school leader, how do you provide a vision for successful inclusion of special education students in general education classrooms?
5. As the school leader, how do you encourage effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers?
6. During the school day, do the teachers collaborate voluntarily? Discuss.
7. Do you provide professional development for teachers to increase knowledge of inclusion? Describe.

- 8. Do you provide professional development for teachers to increase knowledge of collaboration? Describe.**
- 9. When general education teachers and special education teachers are collaborating, does each person have equal power in making decisions? Discuss.**
- 10. When tasks are determined for each teacher, how do they determine if the work load is divided equally?**
- 11. How are resources shared between teachers? (Resources are time, availability, knowledge of a teaching technique or skill.)**
- 12. Do the general education teacher and the special education teacher share responsibility for the academic success (positive or negative) of the special education students?**
- 13. Discuss any barriers that you feel inhibit effective collaboration at your school?**
- 14. Do you think that inclusion is effective at your school? Discuss.**